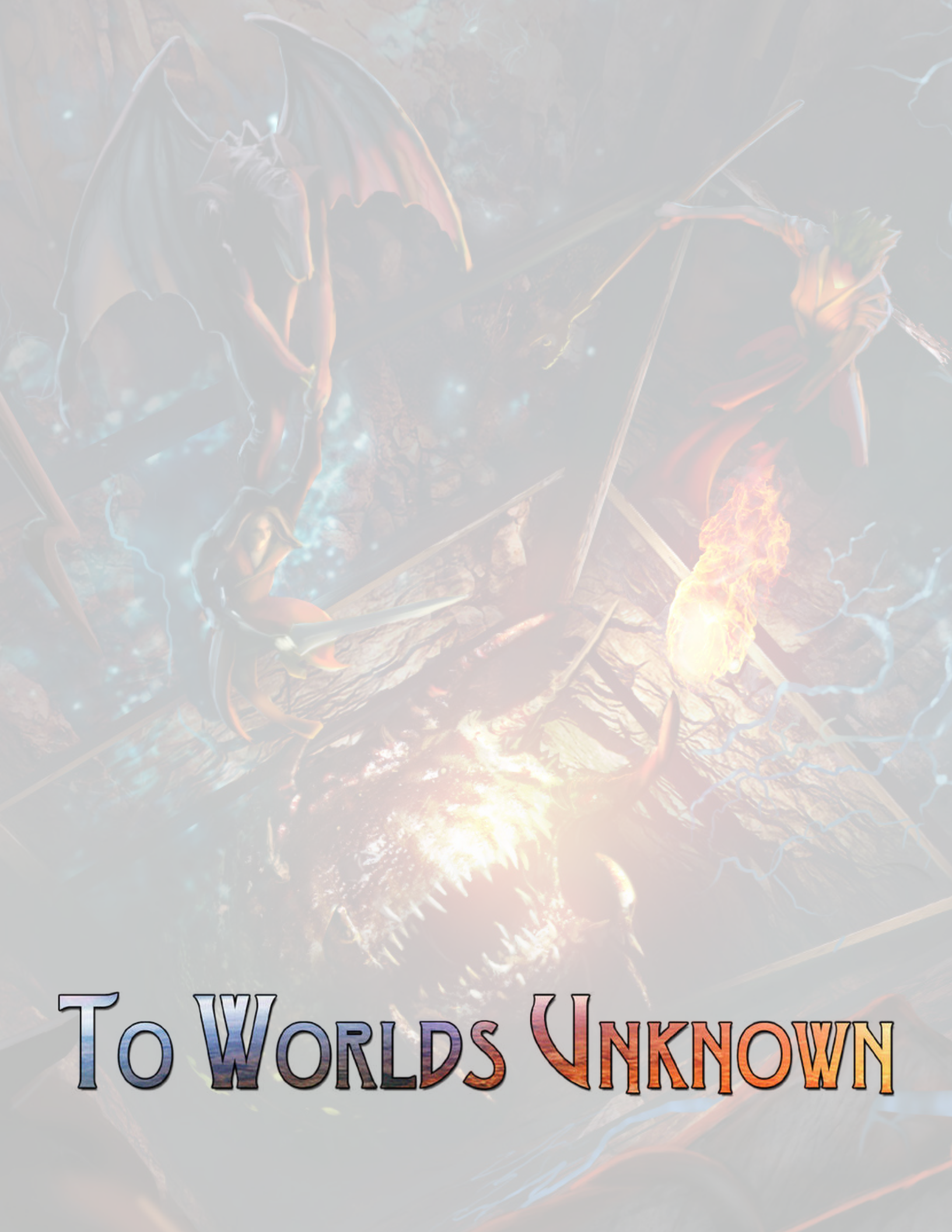
Legendary Planet

To Worlds Unknown

By Jim Groves

Starfinder Compatible



To Worlds Unknown

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- Jason Nelson

To Worlds Unknown

LEGENDARY PLANET: CHAPTER ONE

A collection of unsuspecting worlds stands on the brink of an alien incursion. The harbingers of this invasion have already arrived, identifying the more promising members of native populations for assimilation into an unstoppable force for their alien masters to command. But an ancient prophecy foretold this cataclysm, and it represents the next step in a much larger conflict, one waged for countless millennia and now drawing to a close. New heroes must soon emerge, thrust into a war they could never anticipate, but destined to determine its ultimate outcome.

Advancement Track

This adventure is designed for four PCs, presumably all from the same homeworld. However, characters may also hail from different planets, representing nascent civilizations which may or may not have found their way to the greater multiverse of interconnected worlds yet. PCs should be at 1st level at the start of the adventure and should accumulate enough XPs to reach 5th level.

Campaign Background

Untold eons ago, two ancient interstellar civilizations engaged in an endless war which raged across the multiverse. One side of this conflict—known as the Patrons—favored good, while the other—known only as the Principalities—exulted in evil. Both made extensive use of a network of interplanetary gates to traverse the immeasurable gulfs between worlds. And, as the millennia unfolded, they each became progenitors to a variety of client species—whether uplifted, engineered, or secretly fostered through patient evolution—each one encouraged to take up and embrace their benefactor's ideals.

The ancient war proved neverending, but, in time, the Patrons came to the inevitable conclusion that they couldn't win. So, they made a fateful decision—sacrificing themselves to lock away the Principalities in an interdimensional prison and buy time for their scions to rise up, find their own footing among the multiverse, and win the war they never could. To this end, they further seeded their client offspring with fragments of the secret lore used to construct and seal this prison, hiding them in the ever-evolving genetic code of each species.

Untold ages have passed, and the descendants of both civilizations have matured, resuming the battles their ancestors started, even as they struggle to unlock the technologies and artifacts their benefactors left behind. The Ultari Hegemony represents the dark forces of the multiverse—a powerhouse coalition steeped in the hatred and pain of the Principalities. Meanwhile, the good races of the Bellianic Accord stand opposed to the Hegemony, still clinging to the sheltered Patron worlds their enemies have yet to discover or dominate. Within the Hegemony, a devoted religious cult has manifested, known as the Scions of the Celestial Helix. These zealots have meticulously invaded and combed the worlds which the hated Patrons left behind, constantly searching for the hidden genetic fragments to undo their enemy's last act. On the PCs' homeworld, one of the Scions' scouting expeditions discovered these markers in the native population, and now they seek more samples as a prelude to all-out invasion.

As a result, agents of the Celestial Helix have already infiltrated the PCs' homeworld, abducting sentient creatures as candidates for analysis and experimentation. These victims include the PCs as—unknown to them—their genome represents a key discovery in the necessary sequencing to release the Principalities. A Hegemony scientist named Lomrick controls the alien prison where the PCs are currently held in stasis. This creature represents the jagladine—an ascendant species which serves the Hegemony as scientists, bio-engineers, and weapons manufacturers. On behalf of the Celestial Helix, Lomrick has undertaken the sinister task of preparing the PCs' homeworld for invasion, even as he continues to study their encoded genes for insights into releasing his dark gods.

PART 1: PRISON BREAK

To Worlds Unknown begins with an *in media res* introduction to the Legendary Planet Adventure Path. The PCs unexpectedly awaken from a fugue state as prisoners held inside an alien, off-world facility—with no idea how they got there, or how much time has passed since their last memory of home. They must first defend themselves and find their bearings before they can fully understand what's happened.

Adventure Background

The PCs awaken as abductees housed in an alien prison facility on an entirely different planet called Garsilt. The aliens who abducted them are known as the jagladine—a vicious, scientific-minded species with a penchant for bio-organic experimentation and engineering. They specifically abducted the PCs because they're after the special genetic

code contained in their DNA. And, they've been slowly sampling, analyzing, and testing all manner of creatures taken from their homeworld—as well as many other planets.

Unfortunately for the jagladine, an unexpected event interrupted this effort, and it grants the PCs an opportunity to escape. A rogue meteorite slammed into a portion of the alien prison, knocking out power to most of the containment cells and stasis chambers. At first, the jagladine thought they could contain the damage and preserve their specimens. However, the meteor also carried a number of hibernating void devils which emerged from their burrows and started attacking the prison over the next several days. During this time, the facility suffered further damage from smaller meteorites as well as the depredations of the void devils, and now the prisoner population has broken free and started adding to the chaos. Thus, as the PCs gain consciousness, they should find themselves confused by their unknown surroundings and the panic ensuing around them. Thrust into this situation, they'll soon discover they can only escape by exploring the alien facility, overcoming their captors, and securing an ancient gateway which provides the only exit from the prison and its swiftly destabilizing environment.

Within the prison itself, artificial mechanisms already maintain a compatible atmosphere and gravity, but the external environment—on the planetary surface—presents a toxic and radioactive hazard to most humanoid species. The jagladine chose this location for that very reason, making it far more difficult for captives to escape, except through the heavily-controlled gate which allows them to open portals between other planets in distant star systems.

Several years ago, the ever-ingenious jagladine called upon elemental forces to hollow out the multi-level prison in the living rock surrounding this ancient gate. Over and around this foundation, they cultivated an enormous bio-organism, engineered to enclose the facility and its laboratories. Part-fungus and part-tree, this mindless creature thrives in a variety of conditions and creates a controllable environment for the compound housed within it. The organism's roots are trained to exhale oxygen into the ventilation system, and to provide a modicum of bio-energy used to power the jagladine equipment inside. As a result, the facility makes for an excellent prison, laboratory, and garrison to secure the ancient gateway. This added level of security also makes the facility suitable for performing research on dangerous lifeforms—especially creatures which the jagladine wish to enslave or weaponize for the coming interplanetary war.

The particular gate on Garsilt is incredibly ancient, built by the Patrons millions of years ago. The jagladine have only recently claimed it, which led them to the PCs' homeworld and a handful of other civilized planets in this part of the multiverse. Sometimes, however, the gate malfunctions by periodically failing to open a portal to these worlds, and the jagladine scientists have started compensating for these anomalies by enslaving an elemental creature known as a comozant wyrd to "ignite" and "jumpstart" the gate with surges of plasma energy. Unfortunately, when the meteor struck, the already temperamental gate experienced further degradation, forcing the prison's commander and chief scientist, Lomrick, to evacuate to a nearby "hub" world called Argosa. Since then, Lomrick has been unable to return, though the jagladine longs to do so as a means of following up on the promise of the genetic analysis obtained from the PCs.

A. Jagladine Prison Facility

The alien prison has the following physical features, except where specifically noted. Refer to the *Starfinder Core Rulebook* for specific details on these characteristics. Due to the alien nature of the encompassing organism, there are some unusual features described, so GMs are advised to thoroughly familiarize themselves with this section.

Walls: Although carved from living rock, the facility was built with professional architectural standards. Treat all walls as concrete walls unless otherwise noted.

Ceilings: Most ceilings reach heights of 15 feet high, with each room's description noting any exceptions.

Doors: Treat all doors as wooden doors. Any exceptions have the same statistics as stone doors. Note, most of these entryways slide open and shut automatically, and do not swing on hinges. Doors also do not typically have handles or traditional doorknobs. No mechanical system governs them; the doors are instead connected to the larger organism which sustains the prison's environment. When a door opens or slides shut, it's a contraction and release of fibrous, muscle-like tissue which threads between the walls. Curious PCs can discover this if they break the doors and tear them free.

Locks and Opening Mechanisms: On the side of each door, set into the wall, is a green, circular disk. Assuming a door is unlocked, the disk opens it when touched, but only for a few seconds before the door automatically slides closed again. A locked door requires special prison keys, which resemble short metal rods about 6 inches long and 1 inch in diameter. Touching a key to the circular disks sends a bio-electric signal to the prison's organic "brain" which releases the door with an audible click. PCs can still open locked doors by using tools to penetrate the green disks and manipulate the fibrous tendrils behind them. Thieves' tools can variably tweak and pinch certain "nerve fibers" which involuntarily cause the locks to open, but this imposes a –2 penalty to the Engineering check to disable the device. Cabinets and lockers possess normal locks and handles. Note, simply jabbing daggers or other weapons into locked disks actually severs the "nerve fibers" and effectively breaks the lock, rendering a door impassable unless broken down.

Lighting Conditions: Because of the recent damage from the rogue meteorite, darkness covers most of the facility. In a few rooms, low-light conditions prevail due to lingering bioluminescence, sparking synapses in the walls, or even small fires and malfunctioning equipment.

A1. Prisoner Cells South (CR 2)

The PCs first awaken from suspended animation in this chamber. The room has normal lighting conditions provided by a metallic plate bolted to the ceiling. When ready to begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following:

You awaken to the sensation of something damp and viscous covering your face and body. Your first reflex is to wrench two, thin tubes from your nose and open your mouth to extract a small pipe which apparently kept you from drowning in the thick gel now draining through the bottom of an enclosed cylinder supporting your upright body. Harsh light shines from above as you wipe more of this unknown substance from your face and eyes, and your muscles feel weak and uncertain as you push open a transparent window-like door to release you into the room beyond.

Eight, similar cylinders greet your eyes, all arranged along the room's four, stone walls, forming an irregular octagon. Each one appears constructed of a thick, durable, organic material except for the transparent doors which swing open from the front. Fibrous roots snake down from the 15-foot ceiling overhead, attaching to the top of these cylinders, and a metal plate bolted above them illuminates the room. To the north stands a door bereft of hinges or handles, while a green, three-inch circle slowly blinks on the wall next to it.

The cylinders holding the PCs provided a suspended animation system which their jagladine captors used to keep them hydrated, fed, and sedated. The system normally eliminates much of the standard care the facility provides to maintain healthy specimens for the experiments performed here. Due in part to the meteor strike, the organic nervous system powering it has malfunctioned, and the stasis chambers have unexpectedly released their occupants. The PCs should emerge from the four, southernmost cylinders. Additional units can be added along the walls for parties with more than four PCs. Curious PCs should be able to intuit the cylinder's purpose based on the description, but a successful DC 10 Life Science or DC 15 Medicine check also allows them to ascertain the room's basic function.

The stasis cylinders are semi-organic pods, set with transparent doors. The roots from the ceiling secrete a combination of sedatives and hydrating nutrients, while a secondary root system provides air and eliminates waste. When the doors open, the goo inside drains through a natural receptacle at the bottom of the pod, causing occupants to gradually awaken. Emerging PCs should find themselves well-fed, hearty, and hale, but also draped in goo and a bit disoriented.

Between the southern cylinders, four catch-poles have been stowed by the prison guards. These short devices are affixed with leather loops which tighten when placed over the neck of a grappled Medium humanoid, allowing the guards to direct their drugged prisoners into their stasis pods or toward one of the labs. While not meant for combat (the straps have hardness 2 and 5 Hit Points and can be broken with a successful DC 18 Strength check), the PCs may find them useful as improvised clubs.

Creatures: Three other beasts—alien dog-men called bahgra—also share this cellblock, released from their stasis pods at the same time as the PCs. Shorter than gnolls, and with more of a canine snout and larger teeth—the bahgra were captured from an isolated community on a different planet with no more exposure to off-world cultures than the PCs. Confused and frightened, the bahgra react to their predicament by quickly turning to aggression, as they distrust the PCs and suspect them of aiding in their abduction. The two parties should have no common language, but if the PCs have a means to bridge the communication gap (perhaps with a *comprehend languages* or *share languages* spell), the bahgra hold them accountable for imprisoning them in this strange place. A successful DC 25 Diplomacy check by a character who can communicate with the bahgra may circumvent a fight. Otherwise, the bahgra attack with neither group gaining a surprise round as both require a few moments to recover after emerging from their pods.

Note, neither the PCs nor the bahgra have their weapons, armor, or combat gear for this conflict. The jagladine secured all of those items in area **A2**. If the PCs discover the catch-poles, however, they may use them as improvised weapons. The bahgra have no use for such weapons since they have a superior natural attack with their bite.

Development: Even if the PCs can communicate with them, the dog-men have no explanation for their joint circumstances. The fate of surviving bahgra is ultimately left for the GM to decide. They may serve as replacement characters if a PC perishes during the adventure, or they could come to the PCs' aid again if they're about to be overwhelmed by other creatures in the prison. Alternatively, the tauslek matriarch (see the Timed Event on pg. 10) may pick them off, one by one, thereby adding to that creature's knowledge and pervading sense of horror when the PCs finally meet her.

BAHGRA (3) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

EAC 10; **KAC** 12

HP 13 each (see page 55)

Melee bite +6 (1d6+3 P)

TACTICS

During Combat The bahgra use their Pack Attack ability to gang up on PCs. The bahgra's bite attacks give them a significant advantage in this battle, as the PCs likely do not threaten enemies with their unarmed strikes.

Morale Should the battle turn against the bahgra, individuals quickly submit when reduced to 4 HP or less, backing into a corner and making it clear they'll offer no further trouble.

A2. Storeroom

This rectangular room holds several shelves and racks filled with various pieces of equipment, weapons, and armor. The only exit is a door-shaped panel without hinges set at the northern end of the east wall.

The door to this room is supposed to be locked, but the damage to the prison's nervous system released it. After the PCs enter, it repeatedly attempts to close behind them, but any meaningful resistance causes it to slide open and try again a few moments later. If it successfully closes, the door locks with an audible click. The adventure assumes the PCs are either inside when this happens, or at least had the opportunity to enter. Once locked, a successful DC 20 Engineering check is required to trick the facility's nervous system into opening the door again, but PCs receive a +5 circumstance bonus because of the erratic nature of the malfunctioning controls. Ideally, this encounter should allow the PCs to observe the "living facility" in which they've found themselves, while also giving them an opportunity to regain their equipment and arm themselves.

Treasure: All of the PCs' weapons, armor, and equipment should await them here. Lomrick, the prison's commanding officer had various options on what to do with the heroes, such as conversion to klaven or outfitting them with *mindslave harnesses*. Either scenario would result in the return of their gear to be used in service to the Hegemony, so they kept it in good condition. The GM should exercise reasonable judgment in deciding what equipment the PCs carried at the time of their abduction. Since the PCs won't return home any time soon, important items like spell caches, custom rigs, drones, and other class-critical gear should definitely appear in the storeroom. The PCs may also claim two *mk 1 serums of healing*, a tactical spear, four sets of leather armor (treat as second skin with the environmental protections depleted), four scimitars (treat as tactical dueling swords), and four hunting rifles with 20 rounds each, which once belonged to their bahgra cellmates.

A3. Prisoner Containment West

The door to this room is locked from the outside and requires a successful DC 20 Engineering check to disable the control and open the door.

This stone chamber is lit by a glowing metal panel bolted to the ceiling. Eight dark green, leathery cylinders with transparent hatches stand in the four corners between the walls. Vague humanoid shapes can be observed through a thick liquid film that fills the cells. A single panel resembling a door, but without handles or hinges, is built into the east wall.

This room is identical to area **A1** where the PCs originally emerged from stasis. Each cylinder contains a deceased humanoid creature of varying race and gender, which cannot be identified unless the transparent hatch is opened. The nutrient goo quickly drains away if this happens, automatically disappearing down an opening in the stasis pod.

The cylinders currently contain three hobgoblins, two fetchlings, and three lizardfolk. All of them still have their feeding and air tubes inserted just as the PCs did originally. Inspection of the bodies, however, accompanied by a successful DC 10 Life Science or Medicine check, reveals they all drowned on the nutrient goo, either in their sleep or after a momentary struggle.

PCs who succeed at a DC 15 Engineering or Medicine check can determine that the root-like tubes leading from the top of the cylinders into the ceiling have malfunctioned and pumped goo where air was needed and vice versa. If the PCs failed to examine the roots in area **A1**, they may do so here and gain the same understanding of how the stasis cylinders function as mentioned at that location. This area is intended to demonstrate their abductors have captured a variety of other creatures from their homeworld, while also provide further insight into the malfunctioning prison.

A4. Prisoner Cells North (CR 2)

As with areas **A3** and **A5**, the door to this chamber is closed and locked. The organic locking system requires tools and a successful DC 20 Engineering check to disable the lock.

The same fragrant smell of the goo released from the open cylinders fills this stone chamber. Eight more of the dark green leathery cylinders stand in the four corners between the walls, their transparent panels already open. A single door waits along the south wall.

Creatures: This room is functionally identical to areas **A1** and **A3**, but with a few obvious exceptions. When the PCs open the door, they discover four unconscious bahgra already lying on the floor, their fur still partially covered in goo. Standing among them is an attractive humanoid female, an aasimar named Andretta. She hesitates for a moment as she evaluates the PCs and then quickly pleads for mercy in the Common tongue.

If the PCs speak with Andretta in a friendly manner, she introduces herself. If the PCs ask about (or check on) the bahgra on the floor, she explains that she found them unconscious when she stumbled into the room, and suspects that their stasis cylinders had malfunctioned. A PC can confirm her suspicions with a successful DC 15 Engineering or Medicine check while examining the cylinders.

Andretta too is at a loss for where they are or how they were brought to the strange prison. If she and the PCs compare notes, there are no correlations between her world and theirs except for a similar base trade language and common experiences. Andretta's world sounds very much like the PCs' homeworld, but with different cultures, nations, and history. If asked about the bahgra, Andretta explains she has never seen one before and they're creatures of folklore long thought extinct. On her world, the bahgra are described

Mysterious Abduction and Andretta's Role

The *in media res* introduction of *To Worlds Unknown* throws the PCs into mysterious circumstances right from the start, not really knowing anything, and faced with uncertainty at every turn. It compounds this situation by applying a language barrier which is very realistic under the circumstances—otherwise, all races across the galaxy would coincidentally speak Common. The adventure walks a fine line, however, as these disadvantages may also lead to frustrated players whose PCs don't understand anything and don't know what to do.

Andretta's background and *share language* ability rationalizes why she can understand the aliens. Although she doesn't know it, they visited her world in the ancient past and are now part of the legends and folklore of her people. So, she knows ancient languages and can translate on the PC's behalf, even using her *mindlink* ability to gain a better understanding, if necessary. She also grants the GM an in-character "voice" into the game by having her add context and offer suggestions as needed to help the PCs piece together the story of the alien prison and not just muddle their way through. Her build is also intentionally less aggressive so as to avoid overtly challenging the PCs or automatically presenting an assumed threat.

Once Part 2 of the adventure gets underway, Andretta may start a new life on Argosa, or she can continue to support the PCs as an ally (or even romantic interest) in their ongoing adventures. The beginning of Part 2 also grants the PCs the ability to understand the Common language of Argosa, and any other world they visit by passing through the interplanetary gates of the Patrons. Thus, the prison is the first and last time languages present a major obstacle.

as a slave race to an ancient empire now in ruins. She made the connection because the creatures speak a dead language which she identifies as "Ultari."

If Andretta's introduction to the PCs goes well, she asks if she can accompany them as they search for a means to escape the prison. If one of the PCs carries the tactical spear found in area **A2**, she indicates it belonged to her. She only asks for it back so she won't be helpless if the group encounters more danger while exploring the facility, but she has no wish to bring harm to anyone.

Andretta makes a point of mentioning to the heroes that she doesn't know how long the bahgra will remain unconscious, and the mystic would prefer to be far away when they awaken again, as she doesn't know what to do about them. She winces at the suggestion of killing them in their sleep, but does concede they intended to attack her when she cast her spell. The CR of this encounter only reflects Andretta and not the unconscious bahgra, though the bahgra awaken 2 minutes after the PCs enter this room—frightened, angry, and dangerous.

Development: In the unlikely event the PCs refuse to accept Andretta's help, she tries to follow them through the complex at a distance in hopes of finding her own way out of the prison by observing their attempts to do the same.

ANDRETTA **CR 2**

XP 600

Female aasimar mystic

NG Medium outsider (native)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +4

DEFENSE HP 21

EAC 12; **KAC** 13

Fort +3; **Ref** +1; **Will** +5

Resistances acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5

Andretta

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee tactical spear +5 (1d6 P)
Offensive Abilities
Aasimar Spell-Like Abilities (CL 2nd)
3/day—*share language*
Mystic Spell-Like Abilities (CL 2nd)
At will—*mindlink*
Mystic Spells Known (CL 2nd)
1st (3/day)—*charm person* (DC 16), *reflecting armor*
0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 15), *telepathic message*
Connection empath

TACTICS

During Combat Andretta relies on her spells to defend herself, using *daze* to keep opponents at bay, or casting *charm person* on more melee-capable opponents to gain temporary allies.
Morale Andretta surrenders if reduced to 5 Hit Points or less.

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +0; **Con** +1; **Int** +0; **Wis** +4; **Cha** +2
Skills Diplomacy +7, Mysticism +12, Sense Motive +12
Languages Celestial, Common, Elven, Goblin, Ultari
Other Abilities empathy
Gear tactical spear

BAHGRA (4) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each
EAC 10; **KAC** 12
HP 13 each (see page 55)
Melee bite +6 (1d6+3 P)

A5. Klaven Sentry Post (CR 1)

The door to this room is closed and locked by the building's organic security system. A successful DC 20 Engineering check is required to unlock it. There are no light sources inside.

This rectangular stone chamber is empty except for two strange cylinders set against the northern wall and attached to root-like cables extending into the stone ceiling. These cylinders appear somewhat different than others found in other areas. A single large panel the size and shape of a door is built into the southern end of the west wall.

No check is required to differentiate these cylinders from the stasis pods of other areas on this level, as casual inspection suffices. They consist of a lightly padded crèche with nothing more than the same feeding tube possessed by the other cylinders. Each one is designed for the klaven guards who defend the prison, providing sleeping quarters and a source of food.

Creatures: Two klaven footsoldiers are stationed in this area, unusual monstrosities physically and mentally reconfigured through a genetic and alchemical process to become dangerous, but completely obedient, soldiers for the Ultari Hegemony. Most klaven resemble hairless green-skinned humanoids (based upon their original species) with pupil-less milky white eyes, calcified skin armor, and bone spur protrusions. The troopers are not asleep, but they are unaware that the PCs have escaped. They have a slim chance to overhear anyone tampering with the room's door lock. If either of them succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check, they become aware of the unauthorized attempt to enter the room and prepare an ambush when PCs enter.

Treasure: The klaven possess no treasure besides their gear, but each carries a short 6-inch metal rod which serves as a key to the various lock pads on this level of the prison. When tapped against the green circular disks next to any door, a brief jolt of electricity passes into the locking mechanism and causes it to release. This works on any lock on Level 1 and the Sub-Level (areas **A8** and **A9**). The keys' purpose may be identified with a DC 10 Engineering or DC 15 Life Sciences check.

Development: Klaven do not possess telepathy, but their nanite exchange ability makes them aware of all nearby klaven and their general condition. This is how the footsoldiers know any PC trying to enter the room is not another klaven. Furthermore, the moment either of the klaven become wounded, all others within 60 feet instantly become aware of it. The klaven in this location or in area **A6** respond to the others' distress by investigating and attacking the PCs from behind. They utilize Stealth, if possible, to position themselves for a full attack or to catch an opponent in a surprise round. They move silently and with deadly efficiency. PCs who succeed at a DC 15 Sense Motive check while observing klaven behavior may notice there appeared to be some unspoken or unseen communication between the creatures.

KLAVEN FOOTSOLDIERS (2) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each
HP 13 each (see page 61)

A6. Prisoner Cells East (CR 1)

As with the other prisoner cellblocks, the door to this chamber is closed and locked. The organic locking system requires tools and a DC 20 Engineering check to unlock.

This stone chamber contains several more dark green, leathery cylinders, all with open hatches along the walls. A single panel resembling a door is built into the west wall, and eight humanoid bodies lie side by side on the floor, each one with a single puncture wound at the base of their skulls.

Creatures: This room functions identically to the other cellblocks at **A1**, **A3**, and **A4**. Two klaven footsoldiers occupy this chamber. When the PCs enter the room (or attract their attention by wounding the klaven at area **A5**), the klaven here have just finished euthanizing the prisoners taken from the stasis pods. The soldiers have a small chance of overhearing the PCs disable the door lock when they enter. If the klaven

Alien Creatures and Monster Identification

Each GM is free to make their own decision regarding monster identification and the use of Life Science checks, but it is recommended that creatures like the bahgra, klaven, and tauslek remain outside the PCs' prior experience. These creatures simply do not exist in the legends of their world, and, as such, there really isn't a basis for making Life Science checks to identify them yet. Such checks should be denied for initial encounters, but, after a few experiences with the creatures, could be attempted using the DCs to identify rare creatures as suggested in the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*.

This represents observable traits and visual cues the PCs may have noticed or logical conclusions drawn as they compare such monsters to others they've known. As the PCs travel further across the multiverse, they will come to civilized areas where research and information shared by locals may further enlighten them, and the GM can choose to treat the creatures as average or even very common, depending on the situation. The intention is not to deny the PCs use of their skills, but underscores the fact that they're in an entirely new setting filled with exotic wonders and terrors. Players should be reassured that the full use of these skills will eventually be restored. It is also absolutely permissible for the GM to point out observable behaviors in new creatures, simulating applied learning through hard-won experience.

succeed at a DC 20 Perception check, they have 1 round to prepare to defend themselves.

The soldiers immediately issue commands to the PCs in Common when they arrive, demanding that, "Prisoners return to their cells or suffer pain." This communication proves possible because the prison's jagladine commander, Lomrick, extracted knowledge of the PCs' Common language through the tausleks at area **A16**, bestowing it these specific klaven. Had the meteor not struck the facility, the PCs were intended undergo extensive long-term interrogation, and the Lomrick thought his subordinates might overhear something of value during a prolonged confinement. The klaven do not expect armed and armored PCs to comply with their commands and are not surprised if combat ensues. If the PCs demand an explanation, the klaven offer one in a dispassionate tone. "You were abducted for testing. An anomaly was discovered. After determining your point of origin you will serve no further use and undergo sterilization. Comply and we will spare you needless suffering." Objectively, the soldiers are completely honest, if not forthcoming. They offer no other explanation or dialogue, however, as the klaven see little purpose in a lengthy dialogue with the PCs.

Casual inspection of the bodies on the floor reveals the troopers opened each of the transparent hatches and performed a coup de grace action on each of the sleeping creatures before they could awaken. The klaven have been tasked with the execution of all prisoners on this level.

Development: Thanks to their nanite exchange, as soon as any klaven takes damage, the soldiers in area **A5** become instantly aware of it and respond by converging on this location.

KLAVEN FOOTSOLDIERS (2) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (see page 61)

Gear key to all areas on Level 1 and Sub-Level

Timed Event: The Tauslek Matriarch (CR 3)

The sublevel below the PCs' cellblock once housed one of the prison's most dangerous horrors, a large creature known as a tauslek matriarch. At some point during the PCs' prison break, this predator should cross their path, but the GM should carefully consider when and where to confront them with this monster. Even as a solo encounter, its special abilities present a difficult challenge even for the whole party at full strength.

If the PCs make the conscious decision to descend to the sublevel and explore, they should probably encounter the matriarch somewhere in the elevator shaft above them as it follows them down, effectively cutting off the PCs from the rest of the facility until they can battle their way past it. If the players decide to skip the sublevel and go up, the matriarch should only now be leaving her containment unit and exploring the prison behind them instead, going into prison areas the PCs may have already visited and encountering any creatures they left behind (such as the bahgra or Andretta). Whenever the matriarch becomes badly injured, it retreats back into the elevator shaft where it knows it holds a tactical advantage against anyone trying to pursue. There, it relies on its fast healing to recover until it can venture forth again.

One primary element of horror associated with the tauslek matriarch is that it can steal the memories and mannerisms of its victims, even speaking with their voice, if necessary. These past experiences enable the tauslek to play upon familiar associations and relationships, speaking with the voice of those it slays and using their stolen experiences to trick and emotionally compromise its prey. In gameplay, the GM should look for a suitable NPC from the character's past. This could be a mentor, family member, friend, or love interest, but it should be someone with whom the PCs have formed an emotional attachment. As part of the campaign preparation, the GM should have this NPC abducted along

with the PCs. But, before the PCs awakened (and just prior to the meteor strike), the jagladine and their klaven enforcers fed this NPC to the tauslek. And, once the facility's nervous system malfunctioned, its chamber became compromised, allowing it to escape and devour a klaven handler, thereby giving it a working knowledge of the prison from those memories.

The matriarch uses this information to stalk the other occupants of the prison (including the PCs). With its superior darkvision, it might call out for help in the darkness where it can't be seen properly, tricking the PCs into thinking it's their NPC friend. Once revealed, it also lies in order to obtain an advantage over the heroes, even pretending to be their former friend in a new body, if necessary. Even after this ruse has fallen aside, the GM should use the matriarch's stolen memories as a vehicle to add further horror and tension, pitifully using the voice of their fallen comrade even when wounded by them. It is not inappropriate to also remind the PCs that this may be the last time they ever hear the voice of their friend.

Since consuming the memories of their former friend, assume the tauslek matriarch has an Intelligence modifier of +2, speaks Common, and has the following additional skills relevant to PC's homeworld: Bluff +6, Culture +6, Life Science +4, Sense Motive +4.

Development: If the PCs flee the matriarch at any time, allow them a head start and have the tauslek pause to heal before giving pursuit. What follows afterward should include an extended game of "cat and mouse." She can pursue them level by level and allow the prison's other defenders to wear them down while she lingers in the background, occasionally calling out with the voices of her victims (including those of any PCs she can drag away and devour). Thankfully, some corridors are still too small for the tauslek to comfortably navigate and she prefers not to squeeze through narrow passageways for extended periods of time.

TAUSLEK MATRIARCH **CR 3**

XP 1,200

HP 40 (see page 64)

TACTICS

During Combat The matriarch uses the extra action granted by her supernatural haste to make full attacks, hoping to bite and poison as many opponents as possible so they'll become fascinated with her mesmerizing stare. If she successfully grabs a victim with her bite, she attempts to drag them away and devour their memories. Thereafter, she uses their voice with her sound mimicry ability to lure their companions into yet another ambush.

Morale If reduced to 12 Hit Points or less, the matriarch retreats, attempting to seek a dark corner of the prison so she can recover with her fast healing before resuming the hunt.

A7. Elevator Shaft

Access to the elevator shaft lies behind a sliding door that either rises or descends. Normally, the interior would reveal an elevator car, but this part of the facility no longer works after the meteor strike and the car is now permanently stuck on the sublevel (at area **A8**). Any stolen or recovered keys, a successful DC 20 Engineering check, or a DC 20 Strength check can force the door open from the outside on any of the prison levels. The doors are actually easier to open from within, requiring only a DC 10 Strength check to trigger the shaft's "internal musculature" to permit access or seal it off. As the PCs eventually discover, other creatures have already opened the doors on the upper levels.

Hidden just behind a sliding panel, this dark 10-ft.-by-10-ft.-square shaft goes vertically up and down. Green fibrous material lines its walls, and a thick, vine-like cable hangs down the center from some unknown location in the darkness above.

From this level, the elevator shaft disappears upwards into darkness, beyond the reach of most light sources. PCs with darkvision or a light source should be able to see the top of the elevator car as it sits on the floor of the sublevel (see area **A8**). Anyone seeking to scale the elevator shaft (up or down) must succeed on a DC 10 Athletics check to climb the facility's plant-like "guts," the equivalent of a knotted rope against a wall. The shaft extends far enough that this still remains a perilous feat for armored creatures without a climb speed. Anyone who falls can grab material along the wall to stop their descent with a DC 20 Athletics check. This proves slightly easier where the shaft passes through the floor of any prison level and only requires a DC 10 Athletics check to stop a fall in those areas, granting PCs multiple chances to avoid an inglorious death. The map of the prison includes a diagram clarifying the various floors and ceiling heights. If any PC encounters the tauslek matriarch within the elevator shaft and succumbs to her mesmerizing stare (see page 64), they do not automatically fall, but remain frozen in place as they become fascinated.

A8. Elevator Car

The elevator car is permanently damaged, sitting at the bottom of the elevator shaft on the sublevel. The car itself is a rectangular box constructed of the same organic but rigid, leathery material used in the construction of the stasis cylinders from the cellblocks. If the PCs descend to the top of the car, casual inspection reveals the thick cable running the length of the elevator shaft was once attached to it but is now severed and no longer operable. Furthermore, a large irregular hole has been punched through the top of the car. A DC 15 Life Science or Survival check confirms the hole was made by something very large which chewed its way through the top of the box. Unknown to the PCs, the tauslek matriarch did so as it escaped confinement and has already ventured into the rest of the prison, wreaking havoc. Have the PCs occasionally attempt Perception checks to hear distant screams or chittering from its encounters with klaven guards and escaped prisoners. Once the PCs climb down into the car, they discover the exit door (which would normally slide up) is already battered down, leading into area **A9**.

A9. Sublevel Special Containment Unit

This area is unlit and remains in utter darkness unless the PCs bring a light source with them.

South of the small chamber to the north with its broken door lies an irregular-shaped hallway. Towards the west end stands a slender workbench with a cabinet set in the north wall. A large door-panel, ten feet wide covers the southern wall at the east end with red, spiky runes painted on the door's exterior.

This area once housed the tauslek matriarch, a creature considered dangerous even by the fearsome jagladine and their klaven footsoldiers. The workbench is covered with alchemical and medical equipment used to sedate it and also draw forth "liquid" memories from those it steals from its victims—a technique the jagladine scientist Lomrick has put to great use learning more about the homeworlds of any abductees. Any PC succeeding at a DC 10 Medicine check can make the logical assumption the gear saw use in taking blood and other chemical samples from alien creature—with several of the needles and instruments proving quite long and intimidating.

A bound book also sits on the workbench, filled with dates, times, and chemical notations written in Ultari (which requires either Andretta or magic to understand). There book includes a few remarks about a female "test subject" and the final entry reads, "We have removed several of her hatchlings and placed them in the Level 2 Test Bay. I have a new serum I believe will suspend the compounds formed the tauslek's cranial gland for an indefinite period of time. This could significantly advance our efforts to indefinitely preserve a victim's personality matrix. Degradation of these vital fluids and their memories will become a thing of the past. Unfortunately, the subject is less than happy with me for pursuing these bodily violations. I need to convert a few more klaven to assist in controlling her and guarding against any outbreak. She's quite intelligent, and I don't doubt her capacity to understand the concept of revenge." At the end of this entry, one word identifies the author as "Lomrick." The runes on the door are also written in Ultari, reading, "Danger. Hazardous Specimen."

Treasure: The metal cabinet (hardness 5, HP 15, break DC 23) has a traditional lock and requires a DC 25 Engineering check to open. It contains the following items: two incendiary grenades I, one jump jets armor upgrade, two medpatches, a *mk 1 ring of resistance*, and two *spell amps of lesser restoration*.

A10. Second Level Main Corridors (CR 1)

The long climb to this landing ends at an already open doorway where darkness looms in the corners and halls beyond.

Creatures: When the meteor struck the upper floors of the prison facility, it brought with it several deeply-burrowed void devils (see page 20). These predators have since awakened and begun to assault the prison from above, even as the tauslek matriarch raids from below. A group of void devils already climbed down the elevator shaft and caught some of the klaven sentries on this level off guard. While klaven are normally resistant to disease, they're not fully immune, and a pair of them sustained significant enough injuries that they eventually succumbed to the onset of void parasites just an hour or so later, with the resulting loss of Constitution reducing their Hit Points until they perished and rose as void hosts. The void devils have long since climbed back into the upper level, but the void hosts now roam the hall surrounding the elevator shaft on this level. When the PCs climb through the open door, the void hosts currently shuffle out of direct sight by the doors to areas **A14** and **A15**, but they attack as soon as they become aware of the PCs. Both void hosts still carry the unusual keys which disable the organic locks of the prison. These keys work specifically on Level 2, whereas Level 1 keys do not function at all on this floor.

VOID HOST (2) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

NE Medium undead

Init +2; **Senses** blindsight (sound) 60 ft.; **Perception** +9

DEFENSE — HP 13 EACH

EAC 10; **KAC** 12

Fort +2; **Ref** +2; **Will** +1

Immunities undead immunities; **Resistances** fire 5

Weaknesses vulnerable to sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee claw +6 (1d6+3 S) or filament +6 (1d6 P plus 1d2 Str damage)

Multiattack claw +1 (1d6+3 S), 2 filaments +1 (1d6 P plus 1d2 Str damage)

TACTICS

During Combat The void hosts see any living creature as a source of nourishment and target PCs who look susceptible to their filament attacks.

Morale Void hosts fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str +3; **Dex** +2; **Con** —; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** –2

Skills Stealth +4

Other Abilities unliving

Gear key to locks on Level 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Filament (Ex) A juvenile version of the void devil's tentacles, these long, writhing protrusions seek nourishment in the form of living creatures' blood. When a void host deals damage with its filament, it also deals 1d2 Strength damage and heals a number of temporary Hit Points equal to the damage dealt. These filaments are fragile, however, and can't penetrate heavy armor or powered armor.

A11. Amorphics Laboratory (CR 2)

Without a key, a DC 20 Engineering check is required to bypass the prison's organic lock system.

This elongated, octagon-shaped chamber holds several glass cases, each big enough to contain a large dog or halfling. A solitary workbench rests on the floor to the south with two unusual diagrams affixed to the wall above it. A large door in the center of the north wall provides the room's only exit.

This chamber served as a laboratory where Lomrick experimented on amorphous lifeforms, specifically oozes. Each case houses some form of ooze (see Creatures below), and the diagrams above the workbench represent scientific illustrations identifying two uniquely different creatures. One is labeled in Ultari as a "xoraphond," represented as a translucent slime with two protruding pseudopods. The other diagram is labeled "mindslave harness model 3" and it resembles a roughly square, backpack-sized glob of gray-green sludge and twisting fungal growths.

Lomrick's notes, written in Ultari, reside on the workbench. If read carefully for at least 30 minutes, any character who succeeds at a DC 15 Life Science, Medicine, or Physical Science check can fathom his most recent topic of research. His experiments here dealt with a means of intentionally creating alchemical oozes such that the components remained in two separate batches. Upon mixing these compounds, the alchemical ooze would then reanimate, springing to life as a new weaponized delivery system to set loose on unsuspecting worlds.

The secret door in the northeastern corner can be located with a successful DC 20 Perception check and has no lock restricting access. Lomrick used it as a shortcut between labs and PCs may find it useful in avoiding the void hosts in the corridor outside areas **A14** and **A15** or to confound a larger pursuer like the tauslek matriarch.

Creatures: All of the cases contain some form of amorphous life, but only a few are actually dangerous. Hiding under the workbench is an arachnid robot called BR-N3R, which has served Lomrick as something akin to a familiar. BR-N3R knows the prison facility quite well, but has become compromised due to encounters with the void devils and tauslek matriarch. As a result, its survival instinct has kicked in and it distrusts any creatures venturing here (including the compromised klaven which are now void hosts). As the PCs start to inspect the room, the robot scuttles out from beneath the bench where it hides and uses its plasma torch to shatter a specific case, releasing a dolorous ooze to hopefully occupy

them while it escapes. At the GM's discretion, the robot may also accidentally draw the attention of the klaven void hosts once it reaches area **A10**, and the void hosts redirect their attention to the PCs rather than pursuing the spiderbot if they hear them still battling the ooze.

Treasure: A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Life Science or Medicine check can recognize that this room could serve as a medical lab if the power to the area were restored. In the meantime, PCs can collect sufficient materials here to serve as a basic medkit. In addition, two vials of acid (treat as shock grenades I dealing acid damage rather than electricity) reside inside one of the bench's compartments, but they appear to be hand-crafted and have no labels identifying them as such. A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Perception check can easily locate the vials, and any PC with ranks in Physical Science can identify them on sight. Diligent PCs can find a *spell amp of spider climb* and two *mk 2 serums of healing* in an otherwise empty crate beneath the workbench.

Development: BR-N3R has a built-in key for every room on this level. If cornered, the robot surrenders, and offers information in exchange for their protection. While he is not privy to all of Lomrick's schemes, BR-N3R can explain that the PCs were abducted for medical experimentation but an unusual anomaly was detected in samples of their blood. The robot doesn't understand the exact nature of the anomaly, but knows Lomrick now has an extreme interest in them and their homeworld. Furthermore, BR-N3R can explain that Lomrick is a creature known as a jagladine and works as a scientist the Scions of the Celestial Helix, hailing from an empire called the Ultari Hegemony. Finally, the robot knows that transport in and out of the facility is dependent on an interplanetary gate housed at the top of the prison. If asked about the klaven, the robot can further offer that they are synthetic soldiers created from physically altered captives such as the PCs, but the void hosts are a complete mystery to it.

After sharing any of this information, BR-N3R petitions the PCs to help it reach the top level of the prison so it can assess the damage to the facility. The PCs may wish to keep the robot as a companion on their own volition. If so, it is recommended that the robot's plasma torch temporarily break on its very next use so as not to unbalance future encounters. Otherwise the creature is another means for the GM to provide the players with an in-character context and erstwhile ally.

BR-N3R, ARACHNID ROBOT **CR 1/2**

XP 200

N Small construct (technological)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +4

DEFENSE HP 12 (CURRENTLY 7)

EAC 10; **KAC** 11

Fort –2; **Ref** –2; **Will** +1

Immunities construct immunities; **Resistances** fire 5

Weaknesses fragile, vulnerable to critical hits, vulnerable to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee claws +3 (1d4–1 S)

Ranged plasma torch +5 (1d4 E & F)

Offensive Abilities explode, plasma torch (15-ft. cone; 1d4 E & F; DC 11)

STATISTICS

Str –1; **Dex** +3; **Con** —; **Int** +1; **Wis** +2; **Cha** –5

Skills Athletics +4, Engineering +9, Stealth +9

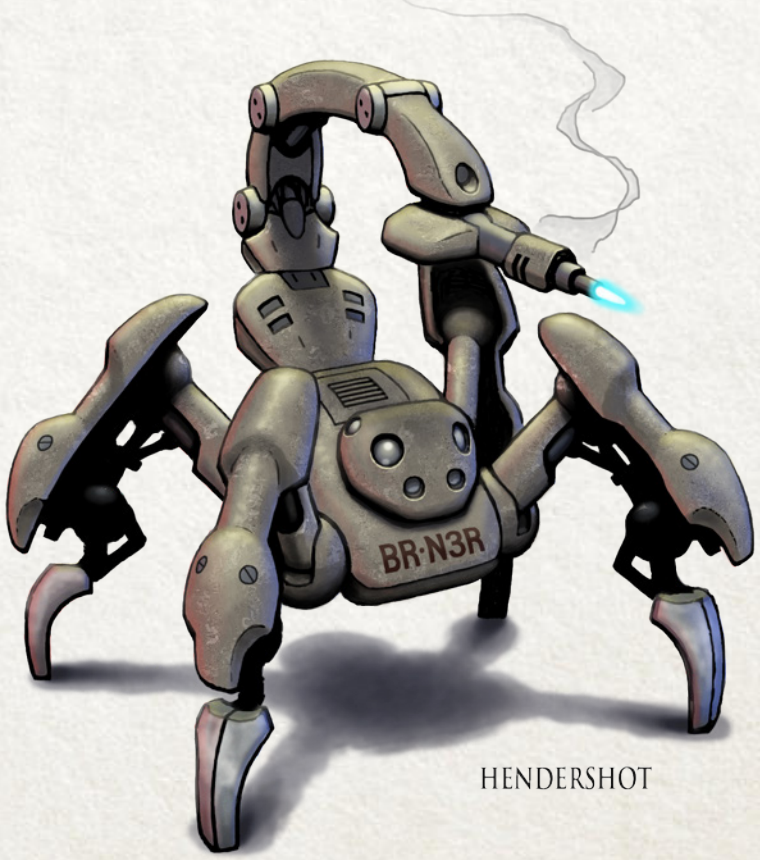
Languages Common, Jagladine, Ultari

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Explode (Ex) If an arachnid robot is destroyed or takes damage while below half its maximum Hit Points, it must attempt a Fortitude saving throw with a DC equal to the amount of damage taken. If it fails, the robot explodes, dealing 2d4 fire and electricity damage to all creatures in a 10-foot-radius burst (Reflex DC 11 half). This destroys the robot.

Fragile (Ex) When badly damaged, arachnid robots function poorly. An arachnid robot reduced to fewer than half its maximum Hit Points is staggered and moves at half speed. Further damage may cause the robot to explode.

Plasma Torch (Ex) An arachnid robot can use its arm-mounted plasma torch in two ways. It can use the torch to make a ranged against a target within 15 feet, or it can emit a 15-foot cone of plasma, dealing 1d4 fire and electricity damage to all targets in the area of effect (Reflex DC 11 half). The robot's plasma torch requires 1 full round to recharge between uses.



HENDERSHOT

DOLOROUS OOZE **CR 1**

XP 400

N Large ooze

Init –5; **Senses** blindsight (vibration) 60 ft.; **Perception** –5

DEFENSE HP 20

EAC 11; **KAC** 13

Fort +5; **Ref** –5; **Will** –5

Immunities ooze immunities; **Resistances** electricity 5

Weaknesses sightless, vulnerability to acid

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee pseudopod +8 (1d6+3 B plus viscous)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Offensive Abilities paralyzing slime (DC 10), viscous (DC 10)

STATISTICS

Str +2; **Dex** –5; **Con** +4; **Int** —; **Wis** –5; **Cha** –5

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ooze Immunities (Ex) Oozes have immunity to the following effects, unless the effect specifies that it works against oozes: critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, polymorph effects, poison, sight-based effects, sleep, and the stunned condition. An ooze can't be flanked.

Paralyzing Slime (Ex) Dolorous oozes are composed of chemical depressants. Any living creature that begins its turn affected by the ooze's viscous ability must succeed at a DC 10 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1 round. This is a mind affecting effect. Creatures immune to poison are immune to this effect.

Sightless (Ex) This creature has no visual senses and is thus immune to effects that require the target to see (such as gaze attacks or visual-only illusions).

Viscous (Ex) Whenever a dolorous ooze damages a creature of Small size or larger, that creature must succeed at a DC 10 Reflex save or be covered in patches of sticky globules. Those who fail are entangled until the patches of goo are removed. The goo can be removed by taking a full action to fling off the globules. If a creature affected by this ability takes any amount of acid damage, the sticky patches are immediately destroyed.

A12. Mimic Research Center (CR 3)

This room has a light source in the form of a metal plate bolted to the ceiling that glows with enough light to see clearly. Several glass cages stand on the floor, all of them partially smashed open. The remains of plants, rocks, and feeding dishes clutter the bottom of the cages and suggest they once housed living specimens. A long table lines the southern wall from the eastern corner. A large door centered in the eastern wall provides the only exit.

This room was kept lit so certain animal specimens could continue to thrive. Each of the cages appears smashed by an irregular-sized object or blunt weapon (it was actually the mimic's slam attack, see below). PCs who perform a cursory search of the room discover a small pile of bones stripped of all meat in the northwestern cage. A successful DC 15 Life Science check confirms the bones come from multiple animals of different types.

The long table lining the southern wall is covered with smaller glass jars of harmless insects, presumably as food for the larger animals. The west end of the table appears to have a finely crafted cryopike resting on top of it, but this is actually an elaborate ruse carried out by the room's only living occupant.

Creature: A mimic has chosen to masquerade as the final five-foot extension to the existing table, creating a false, but attractive looking weapon sitting on top of it. Lomrick fit this mimic with a specialized form of *mindslave harness* hidden within its aberrant flesh, only visible once the beast is slain and returns to its normal form. Lomrick hopes to perfect this technology in order to tame mimics for use as controllable assassins. Unfortunately, when Lomrick evacuated the prison, the experimental harness eventually failed and the aberration broke free of its control. The creature broke into all the remaining cages and devoured the other specimens. Now, it waits for more prey to venture into reach, disguising itself until the perfect moment to strike.

Treasure: The weapon the mimic copied to serve as bait has a real analog. Kicked under the workbench and out of sight is a *glamered tactical cryopike* with 1 battery (20 charges) and a suit of freebooter armor I.

Development: After the mimic is slain and its true relaxes, the gray-green "patch" identifiable as a *mindslave harness* becomes visible. A successful DC 20 Life Science or Medicine check can determine it represents a form of organic mind-control used to enslave the mimic.

MINDSLAVE MIMIC **CR 3**

XP 800

N Medium aberration (shapechanger)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

DEFENSE HP 40

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +5; **Ref** +5; **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities adhesive; **Immunities** acid

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee pseudopod +12 (1d6+7 B plus adhesive)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +13, Disguise +8

Languages Ultari

Other Abilities replicate object

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Adhesive (Ex) A mindslave mimic is coated in a thick slime that acts as a powerful adhesive. This allows it to automatically grapple a creature it damages with its pseudopod attack, and such targets can only free themselves through application of strong alcohol or a similar solvent. A weapon that strikes

a mindslave mimic is stuck unless the wielder succeeds at a DC 12 Reflex save; a stuck weapon can be pried off with a successful DC 12 Strength check. A mindslave mimic can dissolve its own adhesive at will; otherwise, it breaks down 5 rounds after the creature dies.

Replicate Object (Ex) A mindslave mimic can assume the shape of any object of the same size category as itself, though it can't necessarily replicate fine details or textures. A mimic gains a +20 racial bonus to Disguise checks when imitating an object.

A13. Klaven Conversion Chamber (CR 1)

The door to this room is unlocked and the interior is unlit.

Four vats sit on the floor of this rectangular room with slanted corners. Each one is four feet in diameter and four feet tall, filled with a thick opaque, greenish liquid which slowly bubbles, though no steam rises from the top. Next to each vat is wooden enclosure filled with glass bottles and alembics connected by a maze of glass pipes. These contraptions appear to create the greenish fluid and slowly pump it into the adjacent vats through four, transparent, flexible hoses. A single large door exits to the south.

This room serves the insidious purpose of transforming prisoners infected with a mind-control virus called the *assimilation strain* and outfitted with a *mindslave harness* into klaven footsoldiers. The greenish fluid is harmless to the touch, provided the exposure remains brief. Over a prolonged period, however, it causes permanent physiological changes to subjects who soak in it. Those who haven't undergone the prerequisite "treatments" of the *assimilation strain* and *mindslave harness* only suffer and die over time. Otherwise, they produce new klaven by calcifying a creature's outer skin and flooding it with unique nanites to rebuild its underlying musculature and skeletal systems, while also continuing to remap and repurpose its higher brain functions.

The alchemical apparatus proves quite fragile and can be destroyed with a single weapon as a standard action. Doing so however, causes chemicals and fluids to leak onto the floor in all the squares surrounding the apparatus and the vats. Those squares become slippery to non-klaven and count as difficult terrain.

Creatures: Six bodies soak in the vats while they transform into klaven. Four of them are not yet ready and never will become so during the assumed period in which this adventure takes place. The other two are just now ready to emerge from the fluid and report to Lomrick for their initial orders. If the PCs break the alchemical apparatus or disturb the vats in anyway, the klaven stand up and climb out of the vats as a move action. The bodies are not visible in the green fluid, and the klaven do not drown or suffer ill effects while submerged in it. They lack immediate access to manufactured armor and weapons, however, and rely on their natural attacks and their calcified natural armor in combat unless they reach the standard equipment prepared for them (see below).

Treasure: Lomrick has armor and weapons set aside for the klaven for when they awaken. Along the wall, there are five tactical battleaxes (treat as longswords), plus a suit of graphite carbon skin and a carbon steel curve blade.

Development: These klaven know very little and cannot communicate directly with the PCs, but instinctively recognize them as non-klaven enemies. PCs who examine the inanimate klaven bodies in the remaining vats notice they have the gray-green patch of a *mindslave harness* on their back. At the GM's discretion, they may also recognize the victims of the partial transformation as former colleagues or loved ones also abducted from their homeworld.

NEWBORN KLAVEN (2) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

Klaven footsoldier (see page 61)

HP 13 each

Melee bone spur +6 (1d6+3 P)

A14. Observation Deck

The south door leading to this area is unlocked and the room unlit. Details about the other doors appear below.

This octagon-shaped room presents a bare stone floor, walls, and ceiling with no discernable function. Two door panels reside in the eastern wall. The wall between the doors is stone from the floor to a height approximately waist high. The rest of the wall is glass, too thick to be easily smashed open.

Lomrick used this area to test creatures in a simple combat environment. The room is designed so that klaven soldiers could shove test subjects from the cellblocks or laboratories through the south door and Lomrick would then admit them into the battle chamber (at area **A16**) to observe their interaction from relative safety above.

The northeast door is locked and requires a DC 20 Engineering check to disable. The keys carried by the void hosts in area **A10** will permit access. The 5-ft.-by-10-ft. room behind works as a control booth. The wall is thick glass (hardness 5, HP 10, break DC 23). Just inside is a panel with controls which operate the functions of the main room. A PC spending a full round here experimenting with the controls may ascertain how they work with a successful DC 15 Computers or Engineering check.

The main chamber actually has a 15-ft.-by-15-ft. section of floor missing entirely. Instead, the floor has been replaced by a permanent *wall of force* effect overlapped by a permanent *holographic image* to appear as a normal floor. The end result is a floor which appears completely normal, but the controls in the adjacent booth allow the operator to make the floor transparent or to temporarily turn the floor "off" entirely—dropping creatures standing in the marked squares into the battle chamber below.

The door in the southeast portion of the room is locked and requires a successful DC 20 Engineering check to open.

Unlike the other doors, there are no keys in the facility which unlock it. Lomrick has the only key with him, now on another world entirely. As a result, the PCs must finagle the organic lock to open it or bash it down (as a plastic door). Behind it lies a staircase leading to area **A16**.

Hazard/Trap: The inner floor marked by the *wall of force* straddles the line between a hazard and a trap. Ultimately it causes no direct damage to the PCs, as any creatures dropped into the room below benefit from a 1st-level *flight* effect until they reach the floor at area **A16**. PCs who actively search for traps (with a DC 25 Perception check) may notice the center area is unnaturally smooth compared to the rest of the chamber, but cannot locate any mechanism corresponding to the operation of a trap. The floor cannot be disabled by the use of Engineering, as only the controls in the booth can operate it.

Because of the damage caused by the meteor strike, when any single PC walks across the center square of the *wall of force* effect, or two or more PCs step into the outlined area, the floor immediately vanishes, dropping them into the battle pit at area **A16**. PCs standing adjacent to a solid square not in the outlined area can attempt a DC 20 Reflex save to grab hold of the floor's edge before falling, but a PC in the center square receives no save. The floor remains open and exposed for 1 round and then reseals itself with the *wall of force* (CL 15th) but without the *holographic image*—so observers still in this area can see into the area below. If any PC is left hanging from the edge for any reason when the floor resets, they are immediately knocked into the chamber without the benefit of *flight*, taking 2d6 falling damage. Thereafter, the room's floor remains stable for 15 minutes before surges within the bioelectric musculature of the prison facility once again creates the same hazardous conditions for those venturing here.

A15. Microbiology Lab (CR 3)

This rectangular room contains two work tables, each covered with alchemical or medical tools and equipment, including an enormous frame-mounted lens to magnify images, several small, glass dishes, and a number of stoppered glass vials. A door set in the center of the north wall provides the room's only exit.

Lomrick used this laboratory to test and experiment on new strains of the *assimilation strain* and various compounds extracted from the captive tausleks, mostly those related to the science of memory extraction and transfer. The jagladine took his most promising samples with him when he left the prison, but also abandoned several notes about his recent work in a journal on one of the tables. The journal is positioned so those standing before it triggers a pressure plate (see Trap below). A secret door (DC 20 Perception check to notice) also leads to a hidden passage between this room and **A11**.

Written in Ultari, Lomrick's journal includes a confusing jumble of scientific jargon. Recent passages allude to a "field trial on a new planet," the name of which translates to the PCs' homeworld. Lomrick also notes that his "xoraphond agent, Vuelib, reported an initial degree of instability with its prepared *assimilation strain* due to a genetic deviation in the natives." The journal later records Lomrick instructing the xoraphond to "adjust accordingly and start a second trial." The final entry reveals a critical discovery in the xoraphond's analysis, which if confirmed, "must be reported to the Scions of the Celestial Helix immediately."

Trap: While Lomrick wields authority as the acting jagladine commander on Garsilt, he also has several rivals among his peers, and jealously guards his breakthrough discoveries to sustain his rise in power. For this reason, the journal on his work table includes an insidious trap designed to release a cloud of poison gas in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area when a creature stands on the square marked on the map. This gas has no noticeable odor or visual cues until 2 rounds after a creature enters the trapped square to inspect or pick up the journal, and while the environmental protections of armor filter this toxin out, they only do so if activated, and due to the limited duration of those protections, most characters probably don't have them active. The alchemical poison has the same effect as blue whinnis, and the gas naturally dissipates after 1 minute. A hidden switch concealed behind a small panel near the north door can bypass the trap (DC 25 Perception check to notice).

Treasure: Several useful items lie scattered among the various laboratory implements on the work tables. None of them appear remarkable different sitting next to identical, but mundane versions. They include: an *amulet of camouflage*, an *efficient bandolier*, and a *serum of enhancement* (scientist). Lomrick's journal also has a *calling fusion seal* (5th level) oddly affixed to it; a PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Engineering or Mysticism check can determine that this fusion seal has been modified to function when applied to any item of 5th level or lower, not just weapons, but otherwise functions identically to the *calling* weapon fusion.

POISON GAS TRAP **CR 2**

XP 600

Type technological; **Perception** DC 23; **Disable** Engineering DC 18 (plug gas nozzles)

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual; **Bypass** hidden switch (Perception DC 23)

Effect inhaled poison gas (blue whinnis equivalent); DC 13 Fortitude negates; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area); never miss; onset delay (2 rounds)

A16. The Battle Pit (CR 2)

This area is unlit, but lighting can come through the transparent *wall of force* from area **A14** if activated.

This immense chamber has a two-tiered floor. The lower floor is built in the center and drops ten feet down. Metal ladders lead to the higher tier bolted into the north and south walls. The raised floor encircles the center area with two door panels on the east and west sides. The ceiling rises to ten feet above the higher floor.

This organic arena hosts opposing test subjects to pit them against one another in life-or-death struggles, both as part of Lomrick's experiments and for his own amusement. The western door leading to area **A17** slides open automatically as soon as any creature enters the pit, while the eastern door remains locked and requires a successful DC 25 Engineering check to open. No key in the prison facility will open the latter door, as Lomrick took it with him, but it opens easily from the other side and includes a catch beside the staircase to keep it open.

Creatures: Lomrick uses three younger tausleks to conduct battles here, letting them rest in area **A17** between clinical trials. He primarily observes their opponents in battle to learn more about newer species, and then takes steps to ensure the tausleks win so they can feed on victims and steal their memories. He uses his laboratory at area **A15** to extract chemicals from the tausleks so he can harvest and review the memories of their opponents, thereby ensuring he learns even more about the homeworlds of his captives. During the meteor strike, the door to the tausleks habitat opened prematurely and they rushed into this room only to find it empty. They have an initial higher ground combat advantage over any creatures falling into the lower arena from **A14**, and their climb speed allows them to navigate both the floors and walls with no difficulty. Neither has any stolen memories or added Intelligence at this time.

TAUSLEKS (3) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (see page XX)

Matriarch Menace

If the PCs still haven't slain the tausleks matriarch, the transition from the second floor to the top floor makes an excellent time for her to make a final assault, especially if she discovers any slain juvenile tausleks in the battle pit. The corridors on the top floor offer plenty of room for her to pursue them, and it's also a good time to resolve her presence in the facility as an ongoing story element, since the heroes have many more threats to contend with in the halls above.

A17. Tausleks Habitat

This oversized room acts as a holding cell for the juvenile tausleks between battles. A powerful stench from their past meals assaults the senses of anyone venturing here, and a few moldering corpses lay in the corner, dragged back from the battle pit at **A16**. A careful search of the bodies (with a successful DC 20 Perception check or the use of *detect magic*) locates a tarnished *mk 1 ring of resistance*, once worn a sacrificed captive and never noticed or confiscated by the klaven.

Timed Event: The Wyrd Warning (CR 4)

Sometime after the PCs reach the top floor of the prison (but after any final encounter with the tausleks matriarch), they should hear an unusual gong-like reverberation echoing through the corridors. In addition, every 90 seconds or so, a guttural Ultari voice makes an announcement through multiple loudspeakers throughout the facility. If translated (whether by Andretta, BR-N3R, or the PCs), it states, "Warning, facility power compromised. Auxiliary power diverted to atmospheric shielding. Drain will soon exceed capacity. Repairs required or system failure imminent."

Shortly after these messages begin, a shifting mass of roiling clouds charged with electrical energy approaches the PCs, manifesting with the barest outline of a humanoid face. A successful DC 14 Mysticism check can identify this creature as a comozant wyrd—an unusually rare air elemental of blue-green plasma and static electricity. The wyrd attempts to communicate with the PCs through its illuminating flames special ability, sharing emotions and mental images to share information about itself and current state of the facility.

During this interaction, it becomes clear the wyrd wishes to recruit the PCs as allies in its bid to escape Garsilt and return to its homeworld and Elemental Plane of Air. Once held prisoner in area **A20**, the power disruption caused by the meteor strike set it free. As an incorporeal creature, the wyrd could easily leave the prison, but Garsilt has few major bodies of water (its preferred habitat) and wants to leave this planet entirely. At first, it flashes images of a circular metal structure which resembles a gate. Then, it changes the image to depict the PCs and itself moving through the same structure before disappearing, presumably to someplace much safer based on the emotion it shares.

Through a further series of images, they wyrd also attempts to explain the problem facing the prison, showing a meteor striking an external structure and damaging its internal power source. It also shows that the prison has automatically erected a force field to keep air from leaking out of the ruptured exterior. But, due to the damaged power source, it indicates the solution cannot last indefinitely. Furthermore, it shares that they cannot use the gate to escape without repairing the power source. If the PCs have BR-N3R with them, the robot can explain some of these concepts, as well, knowing how to interpret the images they describe and how to associate them with the way the facility functions. Finally, if the PCs agree to help the wyrd, it can convey upon the PCs enough insight to function as a *divination* spell, which they can then use to determine exactly what they need to do to fix the power source.

Reward: If the PCs agree to work with the wyrd, it communicates they must repair the power while it supplements the facility's atmospheric shielding. Otherwise, every living creature in the prison will die and there'll be no one left to activate the gate so it can leave. While they do so, the wyrd indicates it will await them in its former prison northeast of the elevator at area **A20**. Once they come to an accord, award the PCs XP as if they had defeated the wyrd in combat.

Development: If the PCs attack the comozant wyrd, it continues to share its vital message in the hopes of getting through to them, but avoids risking death because of a misunderstanding, using its incorporeal nature to escape through the walls of the facility. Thereafter, it follows after them, emerging again at a more opportune time to try and re-establish diplomatic contact.

COMOZANT WYRD **CR 4**

XP 1,200

N Small outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar, incorporeal)

Init 3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +15

DEFENSE HP 45 RP 3

EAC 16; **KAC** 18

Fort +1; **Ref** +8; **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities incorporeal, plasma form; **Immunities** cold, elemental immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (Su, good)

Melee lightning lash +9 (1d4+4 E)

Ranged lightning lash +12 (1d4+4 E)

Offensive Abilities

TACTICS

During Combat If confronted with violence, the comozant wyrd responds in kind with its lightning lash only as long as it takes to find an opening to escape.

Morale The comozant wyrd attempts to flee combat as soon as possible.

STATISTICS

Str —; **Dex** +3; **Con** +0; **Int** +0; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +5

Skills Acrobatics +15, Diplomacy +10, Sense Motive +10

Languages Auran

Other Abilities illuminating flames, storm speaker

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Elemental Immunities (Su) Unless the effect specifically states that it works against them, elemental creatures are immune to bleed, critical hits, paralysis, poison, sleep, and stunning effects. An elemental creature can't be flanked.

Illuminating Flames (Su) As a standard action, a comozant wyrd can extend an aura of buzzing static electricity reminiscent of flames around all creatures within 30 feet of itself, imposing a –10 penalty on Stealth checks; this effect persists until the wyrd is out of range. The comozant wyrd can communicate empathically with creatures affected by this ability, and can spend 1 Resolve Point to convey insight or information equivalent to a *divination* spell.

Lightning Lash (Su) As a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity, a comozant wyrd can strike a single opponent to which it has line of effect within 30 feet with a lash of electricity. It can choose for this damage to be nonlethal with no penalty to its attack roll. If the target is

affected by the comozant wyrd's illuminating flames, that target is stunned for 1 round unless it succeeds at a DC 13 Fortitude save, and the illuminating flames dissipate.

Plasma Form (Ex) A comozant wyrd is composed of heatless plasma; it gains the incorporeal ability but cannot exist within in a solid object. It must begin its turn attached to a solid object size Small or larger or else it takes 5 damage. Attacks targeting the wryd take a –4 penalty on the attack roll or are resolved against both the wyrd and whatever object it is attached to.

Storm Speaker (Sp) A comozant wyrd can cause storms in an area to intensify or dissipate by concentrating for 10 minutes. The change takes 10 minutes to take effect and lasts for 4d12 hours, though dissipated storms typically don't reform unless the environment is particularly prone to storms.

A18. Power Plant (CR 3)

This large chamber includes four, dominating columns of unusual green metal. Each one throbs with a slow, rhythmic pulse shedding a faint green light with the eerie sound of a heartbeat. A thin layer of orange dust coats the floor marked by animal-like paw prints. To the northwest, a large breach has taken down part of the external wall, plainly revealing an alien landscape of barren rubble and debris strewn by the impact crater of a dark blue meteorite. A shimmering translucent field of energy has cordoned off the broken wall from the outside environment, occasionally flickering with an intermittent drop in power. Several spherical objects litter the ground before the meteorite, both inside and beyond the energy field. Composed of strands of unusual metal, they appear hollow and torn open from within. A nauseating tang emanates from them, filling the air inside the room. The only other exit lies east, where the sliding door has been battered down.

The rogue meteor struck this side of prison where it emerges from the planetary crust of Garsilt. Other meteorite fragments inflicted further damage to the prison's exterior, but the facility's organic components can limp along and regenerate given enough time. The damage here, however, has struck the main conduit to power plant, breaking through part of the wall. The temporary energy field created an atmospheric containment field, but facility's waning power can't sustain it for much longer. Worse still, the drain is sufficient to cause the already temperamental gate to no longer function, preventing the return of Lomrick and his klaven soldiers.

To stabilize the environment, someone must repair the power plant, which uses a combination of magic, bio-organic nerves, and hard technology to operate. The most obvious damage exists at the column in the northwest corner where multiple rocks fell and exposed its internal components. The requisite spare parts are located in area **A24**. While incredibly complex, the power plant was designed so that even klaven footsoldiers could fathom and service it if necessary. Once the PCs have the proper materials, they must succeed at a DC 10 Engineering, DC 15 Medicine, or DC 18 Mysticism check to make the necessary repairs, which requires 5 minutes of uninterrupted work. Andretta's assistance grants a +2 competence bonus on these checks as she can read the Ultari instructions and diagrams kept nearby. PCs with levels in Mechanic or assistance from BR-N3R automatically succeed, but still require same amount of time to complete the task.

Creatures: Two void devils also prowl among the rubble just outside the prison on the other side of the containment field when the PCs enter. These creatures do not breathe and prove comfortable in either atmosphere. They arrived with the meteorite and now use the top level of the prison as their hunting grounds. Since the containment field only prevents the atmosphere from passing through, the void devils are free to come and go from the breach in the wall, using the cover of the meteorite's rubble to retreat and regroup, as necessary.

Hazard: The air in this room is slightly toxic and suffused with low radiation until the PCs repair the power plant. Creatures dependent on breathing without functioning and activated environmental protections in their armor have the shaken condition (as well as a sharp headache and dizziness) while in this room, and must contend with the effects of radiation normally (see Chapter 11 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*). Once the power plant is repaired, this hazard goes away as the prison's controls reestablish a fully compatible atmosphere. Any PCs who walk outside the containment field, however, quickly realize Garsilt's environment cannot sustain them: in addition to a toxic atmosphere, the planet is suffused with heavy radiation.

Development: Once the PCs restore power, the protective atmospheric shielding fully stabilizes and the facility no longer faces the threat of imminent failure. The constant alarm and repeated warnings (described in the **Timed Event: The Wyrd Warning**) finally subside. This outcome still won't re-enable the gate at area **A27**, but does lower the overall threat level. They can also use the generator to recharge batteries and the environmental protections on their armor, if necessary.

VOID DEVILS (2) **CR 1**

XP 400 each

N Medium aberration

Init +2; **Senses** blindsight (sound) 60 ft.; **Perception** +0

DEFENSE **HP 20 EACH**

EAC 11; **KAC** 13

Fort +3; **Ref** +3; **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities no breath; **Immunities** cold, disease, poison; **Resistances** fire 10

Weaknesses blind, vulnerable to sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6+2 P plus parasitic offspring) or tentacle +8 (1d6+1 B)

TACTICS

During Combat Void devils seek to infect as many foes as possible with their parasitic bite.

Morale Void devils fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str +1; **Dex** +2; **Con** +4; **Int** –4; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Acrobatics +5, Athletics +5, Stealth +10

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Parasitic Offspring (Ex) A void devil's bite carries thousands of autonomous, parasitic particles of genetic matter. When a void devil deals damage with its bite attack, the target must succeed at a DC 10 Fortitude save or be infected with these offspring, which function as the void parasites disease. A creature infected with void parasites that dies rises as a void host 2d4 hours later.

VOID PARASITES

Type disease (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 10

Track physical (special); **Frequency** 1/day

Cure 2 save

A19. Klaven Barracks

This chamber lies bare except for 12 strange cylinders integrated into the north and west walls, each attached to root-like cables extending from the stone ceiling. Two wall lockers are built into the east wall.

The bulk of the prison's klaven used this chamber as their barracks, leaving the door unsecured in their haste to respond to the damage caused by the meteor strike and its invading void devils. Their sleep cylinders remain empty, but their equipment lockers still contain some spare gear. Each one has a traditional mechanical lock requiring a successful DC 20 Engineering check to open.

Treasure: One locker contains two tactical dueling swords, two estex suits I, three *mk 1 serums of healing*, and a *spell amp of tongues*. The last of these is used only as needed to interrogate special off-world prisoners. The other locker contains a thunderstrike sonic pistol with a fully charged battery and a force field (brown) armor upgrade.

A20. Wyrd Containment Chamber

The door to this area is locked with the facility's organic security system, requiring a successful DC 20 Engineering check to unlock it. The inner chamber has powered down, leaving it in darkness, but if the comozant wyrd resides here, its body sheds light equivalent to a candle.

This stone chamber houses a slightly smaller internal room composed entirely of glass. Large panes form a rectangular enclosure over a shining, metallic pedestal centered in the floor. A single, transparent door swings outward from this chamber, already standing open. A small control panel occupies the wall just north of the room's only exit.

The comozant wyrd (see **Timed Event: The Wyrd Warning**) normally resides here, trapped within the glass-like enclosure (hardness 5, HP 15, break DC 23). With the chamber currently powered down, the energies which normally shackle the wyrd inside have faded, allowing its only prisoner to roam free. The inner chamber has no lock, but a magnetic catch holds it shut when energy is coursing through the pedestal. The panel on the far wall also activates a permanent *wall of force* (CL 15th) lining the inner glass which also prevents the incorporeal elemental from escaping. Other buttons activate the chrome pedestal to siphon energy from the wyrd's plasma form as a reserve resource for powering the facility's gate at area **A27**. This electrical lightning rod causes 1d6 Constitution drain to the wyrd every 6 rounds when activated, but grants the facility considerably more power. A successful DC 12 Engineering check or DC 18 Mysticism check is sufficient to decipher the purpose of this apparatus. Comprehension of the Ultari language (whether by magic or Andretta) grants a +2 bonus to these checks. A PC levels in mechanic or help from either BR-N3R or the comozant wyrd succeeds automatically.

Development: If the PCs haven't refused to ally with the comozant wyrd in their first encounter, they may still find it here. The creature is intended not as an enemy of the PCs, but a necessary ally. If they parted on unfriendly terms, the PCs may still have to force the wyrd to serve as a power source to activate the gate so they can escape the prison. If attacked, the wyrd follows the PCs into this inner chamber, and if they can lure it into the glass enclosure, the *wall of force* can be re-activated on the far wall as a readied action to trap it once more and siphon its energy for the gate's operation. Note, this outcome should serve as a back-up plan offered by BR-N3R or Andretta as they seek to help the PCs (and themselves) in escaping the prison.

If the PCs parted on good terms with the comonzant wyrd, it should return to this room while they investigate and repair the power plant. Once they determine the gate needs more power to function, the wyrd ultimately volunteers to serve as a secondary power source. This requires self-sacrifice on its part, but the wyrd conveys its thoughts and emotions to them, indicating it believes no living creatures should be confined by such a cage. Thereafter, it voluntarily moves into the central chamber again, instructing the PCs how to activate the controls to siphon its power again. Whatever outcome befalls the comozant wyrd, award the PCs XP as if they defeated it in battle (but do not duplicate the XP award described in the first encounter).

A21. Lomrick's Quarters (CR 2)

Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene when the party first approaches this room:

This hallway ends before a large door, but the green circular disk covering its organic locking system has been torn away. Greenish fluid oozes down the wall where the vines that resemble nerves, veins, and arteries now lie exposed. The door itself opens and closes every few seconds, seemingly at random, exhibiting deep claw marks on its surface.

The PCs may simply step inside the room when the door intermittently opens. Read the following description when they enter:

This room once provided a palatial bedroom with a large, ornate bed in the northeast corner and a man-sized desk and chair to the southeast. The primary exit lies west, while two smaller reside on either side of the room beside it. The chamber has experienced significant vandalism, however, as the bed's mattress, pillow, and sheets have been torn to shreds, and the stationary writing equipment lie scattered across the floor. Amongst the chaos, a tinny recording repeats a message every few minutes, alternating between two alien languages.

This room served as commander Lomrick's personal quarters and includes far more concessions for comfort than the klaven guards enjoy. The two smaller, internal rooms supply a lavatory and closet. The desk appears to have been recently emptied, but the top drawer contains a false bottom (see **Development**), which the PCs can locate with a successful DC 20 Perception check.

Creatures: Two klaven currently rampage through this room, only recently transformed into void hosts. As they began to succumb to the void death inflicted by the void devils, they followed their last instincts and forced their way into this chamber blindly in search of anything which might cure them among Lomrick's personal belongings. Unfortunately, they passed away and rose as void hosts before they complete their search. The pair now remain too witless to move through the door when it opens randomly and so have become trapped inside, mindlessly milling around the room. They do not hesitate to attack the PCs as they enter, seeking to feast on their blood.

Development: The recorded message, Lomrick's last orders to his klaven footsoldiers in the event he couldn't return to the prison, repeats itself every few minutes while the PCs are in the room. If at least one of the PCs speaks Ultari or Jagladine, read the following message relayed over the damaged speakers. In the event no PCs speak either language, one of their allies can help translate the gist.

"Klaven warriors, hear the words of your commander. In the event I cannot return within three days due to the gate's malfunction, you are to perform the following tasks. Hidden in the prearranged storage space are a recording gem and my reporting drone. You must activate the drone and send it through the gate to Balimere with the protocol to deliver itself to Supervisor Garabool at the Temple of the Celestial Helix. This is your highest priority. Do not attempt to reconfigure the gate to the home planet of our test subjects. The gate is on the verge of complete inoperability, but I shall procure a means of repairing it from the ones who sought to keep such knowledge from us on Argosa."

If BR-N3R is present and allied with the PCs, the spiderbot reports that whatever hidden storage place Lomrick refers to must exist in this specific room, even aiding them in searching for it, if so ordered. This takes approximately 10 minutes and eventually turns up the hidden compartment in the desk drawer. Within this compartment is a Tiny mechanical apparatus with rotor blades, a lens on one side, and a glassy screen along the opposite face. Activating the device requires a DC 15 Computers or Engineering check; if successful, the PCs find themselves watching the screen display a bizarre creature with dark, chitinous scales, a narrow insectile head, and four arms giving a report in the Ultari language.

"Supervisor Garabool, this is Officer Lomrick reporting from Garsilt. I've made a vastly important discovery in our efforts for the Celestial Helix. Test subjects removed from the newly discovered world we found appear to have the exact Patron coding we need, however, I'm experiencing problems with Garsilt's gate again. It maintains a stable connection to Argosa but has proven unreliable and intermittent when trying to reach other words, especially this most promising one. I'm temporarily evacuating to Argosa to ensure I don't get stuck on Garsilt. In light of our profound discovery with these test subjects, I'm enlisting aid from our assets in Zel-Argose. We can't afford to lose contact with a planet this valuable now that we've found a sign as important as this. Glory in our lifetime! I will endeavor to secure a new communication link from Argosa, as soon as possible. Lomrick out."

The PCs can keep the drone if they choose, but the device requires a successful DC 25 Computers check to remove Lomrick's programming. If so wiped, the PCs can use the drone as a spy drone without any upgrade abilities, but due to the clear indicators of jagladine ownership, it can't be sold.

VOID HOSTS (3) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (see page 13)

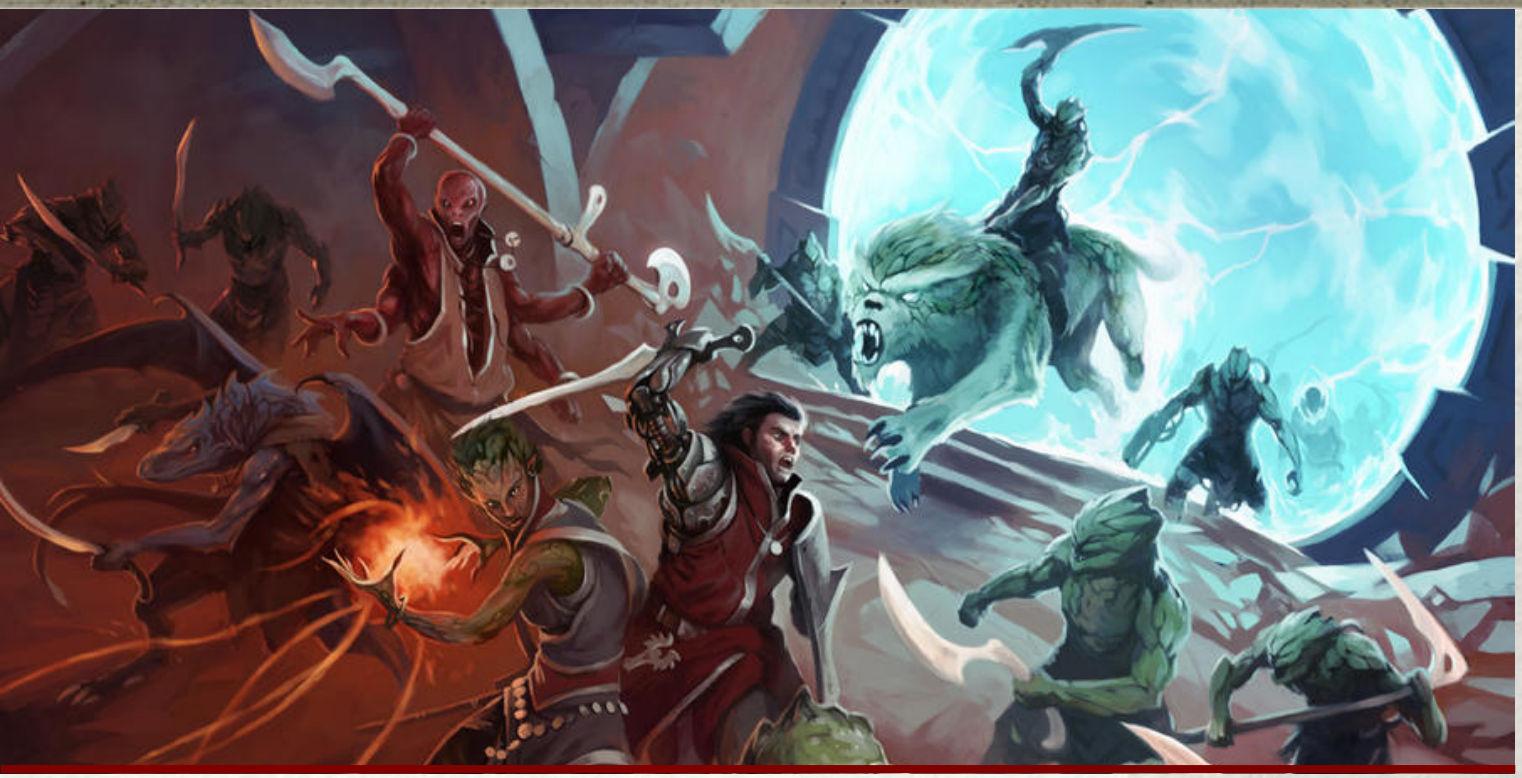
Gear keys to all areas on Level 3

A22. Communications Room

This room is locked with the facility's organic security system. Much more resilient to manipulation, it requires a successful DC 25 Engineering check to open.

This long chamber contains only one feature, a stone throne on a raised pedestal.

This chamber provides the prison's primary communication with the rest of the galaxy—and, specifically, Lomrick's means of speaking directly with his off-world colleagues. When operated correctly, the throne can cast a modified *telepathic bond* spell once per day, allowing the creature seated upon it to benefit from such a bond with a single known individual on a world they've visited before. This ability can be activated only once per day and functions for 10 minutes. The throne organically exists as an integrated component of the facility's infrastructure and cannot be removed. Any intelligent creature can use the throne without a command word, but they must understand the throne's purpose first. The device radiates moderate divination magic and can be identified with a successful DC 24 Mysticism check. Thereafter, it requires a successful DC 15 Mysticism check to activate. The throne represents the last potential farewell the PCs can make to their loved ones back home in a very long while.



A23. Ventilation Alcove (CR 1)

A discernable breeze flows east out of this otherwise empty alcove. A metal object appearing as a nested set of cones is the source of the airflow which streams steadily from it.

The living prison exhales fresh oxygen-rich air through the facility on every level, but this alcove receives the majority of it. This ensures the command level's habitability as a priority over the cellblocks. If the PCs remove the air ventilator (assuming they can get to the ceiling), the air duct leads into the structure's organic interface, but rapidly shrinks to Tiny and then Diminutive size.

Creature: A single void devil guards this alcove to defend the alpha void devils in area **A25**.

VOID DEVIL **CR 1**

XP 400

HP 20 (see page 20)

A24. Exhaust Alcove

This area is similar to area **A23**, except the air flow steadily moves up and to the west through an immense grate in the ceiling. There it travels down a series of organic capillaries where the prison filters it and returns as a breathable atmosphere again. The alcove is otherwise empty.

A25. Maintenance Bay (CR 4)

The door to this chamber lies broken and physically peeled away from the track where it once slid into the wall. Tendrils of green plant-like material are still attached where it hangs crookedly to the side. Beyond the door, metal shelving units fill the room, each containing various tools and supplies, some quite pedestrian, and others so exotic as to defy explanation.

This room contains a variety of resources for the facility's upkeep. Some of them include common carpentry tools and hardware such as buckets and mops, surplus alchemical equipment, and even "normal" food supplies (for Lomrick's benefit). PCs who spend at least 5 minutes searching this area discover an enclosed wooden box on one of the highest shelves containing the necessary items to repair the power plant in area **A18.**

Creatures Two alpha void devils have battered and then torn the door aside to make this room their newest lair. They protect this territory by attacking any creatures which venture here.

ALPHA VOID DEVILS (2) **CR 2**

XP 600 each

N Medium aberration

Init +2; **Senses** blindsight (sound) 90 ft.; **Perception** +0

DEFENSE HP 25 EACH

EAC 13; **KAC** 16

Fort +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities no breath; **Immunities** cold, disease, poison; **Resistances** fire 20

Weaknesses blind, vulnerable to sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +10 (1d6+3 P plus parasitic offspring) or tentacle +10 (1d6+2 B)

Multiattack bite +4 (1d6+3 P plus parasitic offspring), 2 tentacles +4 (1d6+2 B)

TACTICS

During Combat Alpha void devils seek to infect as many foes as possible with their parasitic bite.

Morale Alpha void devils fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str +1; **Dex** +2; **Con** +4; **Int** –4; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +7, Stealth +12

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Parasitic Offspring (Ex) See void devil, page 20. The DC of saving throws to resist an alpha void devil's parasites is 11.

A26. Prisoner Intake Area (CR 3)

This open area has a sunken floor in the center which is approximately a foot and a half lower than the main floor. Two wooden enclosures stand to the south with their sides open to the east and west. And a large door leads south, while an open corridor exits to the east.

This location serves as a prisoner intake area, which Lomrick and his klaven used to process the PCs and the other prisoners in the cellblocks after abducting them from their homeworlds. The wooden enclosures are sturdy wooden booths permanently built into the floor, enabling the klaven to isolate captives which prove particularly resistant to the sedatives used to incapacitate them. Prisoners are also grouped in the sunken floor so they can be carried east to the elevators enmasse when the klaven are ready to put them into stasis.

Creatures: Four klaven footsoldiers still defend this position, securing access to the gate room at area **A27**. They once had stronger numbers, but the void devils already killed and transformed two of them into void hosts (now in area **A21**). The remaining klaven now wait for reinforcements, not yet realizing Lomrick and his lieutenants have been unable to activate the gate again from Argosa.

KLAVEN FOOTSOLDIERS (4) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (see page 61)

Gear *mk 1 healing serum*, keys to all areas on Level 3

A27. Gate Room (CR 3)

A metallic circle, easily large enough to walk through, stands in a heavy metal frame atop a five foot stone dais at the south of this room. Its thick metal construction is embossed with a series of large flat runes along its rim, and two pillars stand to either side of the dais. A sloping ramp leads from the platform to main floor. The only exit is a door to the north.

This room houses the gate from Garsilt to other planets within range, including the planet of Argosa where Lomrick fled after the meteor strike compromised the prison, as well as the PCs' homeworld which the jagladine intends to invade. The gate is the room's only significant feature, but if the PCs haven't yet repaired the power plant in area **A18**, it remains inoperable. A *detect magic* spell barely registers more than a faint conjuration aura from the ageless artifact, but PCs who succeed at a DC 12 Mysticism check can determine the gate simply lacks enough power to register its full capability—though that check does not clarify what exactly powers the gate. If the PCs have successfully communicated with the comozant wyrd, they may understand the cause. BR-N3R can also explain that the gate runs off the prison's bio-energy and won't function until the power plant is fixed.

Unfortunately, once the power plant is repaired, the gate only radiates a moderate conjuration aura and still fails to activate. When this is discovered, either the comozant wyrd or BR-N3R come to the dire conclusion that the facility lacks enough power to activate while also maintaining the containment field preserving the atmosphere where the meteor breached the prison's outer wall in area **A18**. The status quo permits creatures in the prison to temporarily survive until the food or water runs out, but no one can leave, either.

When this becomes evident, the comozant wyrd communicates with the PCs (or at least the character to show it the most kindness) that they should accompany it to area **A20**, where it was once imprisoned. There, it conveys images suggesting that the PCs should activate the controls to siphon its plasma energy to activate the gate. Should the PCs (or BR-N3R) point out this may kill the wyrd, the creature doesn't deny it. It empathically relates it would rather sacrifice itself than have any of them remain slaves.

If the PCs attempt to understand how the gate is used, a successful DC 15 Mysticism check allows them to recognize the gate can theoretically reach multiple locations by configuring the runes along its outer rim in a particular sequence. A successful DC 20 Perception check also determines the runes were recently touched by certain impressions left in the dust. BR-N3R can also volunteer what it believes to be the sequence leading to the PC's home world, but any attempt to return there becomes pre-empted by Lomrick's soldiers, as the moment the facility has enough energy to power the gate, a purge team opens it from another remote location on Argosa (similar to a readied action).

Lomrick's foremost lieutenant, a klaven officer named Maulvorge, has been actively trying to reconnect to the Garsilt gate this entire time. And, the moment the energy from the comozant wyrd establishes enough critical mass to activate the gate, he opens it from the other side. This action prevents the PCs from opening a path to their homeworld as Maulvorge sends klaven reinforcements to retake the prison ahead of his arrival. Note, if none of the PCs are present at the gate when the comozant wyrd makes its sacrifice, the klaven

emerge before they return, advancing cautiously through the facility to hunt down escaped prisoners and void devils alike. During this time the gate continues to radiate an intense light, maintaining the connection to Argosa, but making it impossible to discern what lies on the other side.

KLAVEN FOOTSOLDIERS (4) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (see page 61)

Gear *mk 1 healing serum*, keys to all areas on Level 3

Timed Event: The Lieutenant's Arrival (CR 4)

After the first wave of klaven are defeated, Maulvorge personally leads another team through the gate. His nanite exchange ability allows him to immediately assess the condition of any klaven within 60 feet, including the status of the first wave. He quickly seeks to re-establish command of the prison facility, wading into melee with his solar weapon (which takes the form of a particularly shiny scimitar). This battle should present an epic challenge for the PCs, but the GM should consider adding allies such as Andretta or any remaining bahgra to even the odds.

Development: Once Maulvorge falls in battle, the gate begins to pulse with an ever-increasing intensity of light, making a careening sound as a slight tremor rocks the entire prison. Any PC allies like Andretta or BR-N3R urge them to jump through the gate lest it shut down and forever trap them on this world. The PCs should be allowed a few rounds to collect treasure or equipment from fallen adversaries. If necessary, the GM should give players a strong hint that wherever the gate leads, it might be the one opportunity their PCs have to leave this place. Additional tremors and even klaxon-style sirens may sound to encourage them to pass through the gate before it closes.

Once the PCs pass through the portal, they have a momentary sensation of being utterly alone in the vast black void. Heartbeats later, pinpricks of light come into existence. At first one-by-one, and then seconds later they appear in the thousands and then millions. Bare moments later each PC has the sensation that motes of light are rushing towards them, until they're no longer surrounded by darkness but a stark and perfect white—as if the light itself were pouring into them. The sensation of power coursing through every cell in their body becomes so intense as to almost cause each of them to lose consciousness...and then, they stagger out the other side of the gate. Forever changed.

LIEUTENANT MAULVORGE **CR 3**

XP 800

Male klaven solarian

LE Medium humanoid (vesk)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +8

DEFENSE **HP 40**

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +5; **Ref** +5; **Will** +4; +2 vs. disease, ingested poison, nauseated, and sickened

Immunities fear; **Resistances** electricity 5

Weaknesses malign influence

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee solar weapon +11 (1d6+7 S plus 1d3 F; critical burn 1d6) or bone spur +11 (1d6+7 P)

Ranged lieutenant spur rifle +8 (1d10+3 P; critical injection DC +2)

Offensive Abilities natural weapons, stellar revelations (black hole [20-ft.-radius, pull 10 ft., DC 12], plasma sheath, supernova [10-ft. radius, 1d6 F, DC 12])

TACTICS

During Combat Maulvorge first attempts to demoralize the strongest-looking champion among the PCs with an Intimidate check and enters photon mode. He then activates his plasma sheath revelation and engages in melee. He tries to flank with his warbeast or the klaven footsoldiers to offset the penalty for making full attacks. Once he becomes fully photon-attuned, he uses his supernova revelation to damage all foes within range.

Morale Maulvorge fights to the death.

MAULVORGE

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +1; **Con** +4; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +1
Skills Intimidate +13, Mysticism +8, Sense Motive +8
Languages Common, Jagladine, Ultari
Other Abilities armor savant, converted host, energy modulation (1/day), nanite exchange, solar manifestation (solar weapon), stellar alignment
Gear defrex hide with a decorative emblem on one shoulder of a black flame on a winged helmet (mk 1 electrostatic field), lieutenant spur rifle (see page 67) with 6 spurs, least photon crystal, *mk 1 ring of resistance*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Converted Host (Ex) Klaven transformations leave nothing to allow for restoration of a base creature to its original self. As a result, klaven cannot be killed and returned to life with *raise dead* or similar effects, though spells such as *miracle* and *wish* could be used to do so.
Energy Modulation (Su) Once per day as a reaction, a klaven foot soldier can treat positive and negative energy effects as if it were an undead creature, taking damage from positive energy and healing damage from negative energy. This effect lasts until the start of the klaven's next turn.
Malign Influence (Su) Klaven take a –2 penalty to resist charm and mind-affecting (compulsion) effects from evil creatures. This penalty increases to –6 if the creature also has the jagladine subtype.
Nanite Exchange (Su) Klaven nanites swarm around each klaven on a microscopic level, providing a continuous awareness of the location and condition of other klaven within 60 feet, as the *status* spell. Klaven can communicate with one another by passing memories and sensory information through their nanites, but must come into physical contact to do so. This exchange of memories requires a full-round action and only consists of perceptions and first-hand experiences. Klaven cannot exchange skills, special abilities, or other individual qualities in this manner.

KLAVEN FOOTSOLDIERS (3) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each
HP 13 each (see page 61)
Gear *mk 1 healing serum*

PART 2: THE LOST TEMPLE

As the PCs transition through the gate from Garsilt, they emerge on an entirely different world called Argosa. This process also triggers an unexpected transformation in the PCs, as their blood contains a special genetic sequence embedded in their evolving species long ago by the Patrons. Ultimately, these encoded genes identify them as one of the last, best hopes to rid the universe of the Hegemony's ancient founders, the Principalities. Thus, the combination of Garsilt's malfunctioning gate, its artifact-level technology, and the additional power surge provided by the comozant wyrd awakens this unexpected potential within the heroes. They immediately undergo an ascension of sorts, receiving a significant boon in preparation for an epic destiny. This benefit takes the form of the Morphic Nature feat (see sidebar), which each PC immediately gains as a bonus feat.

Morphic Nature

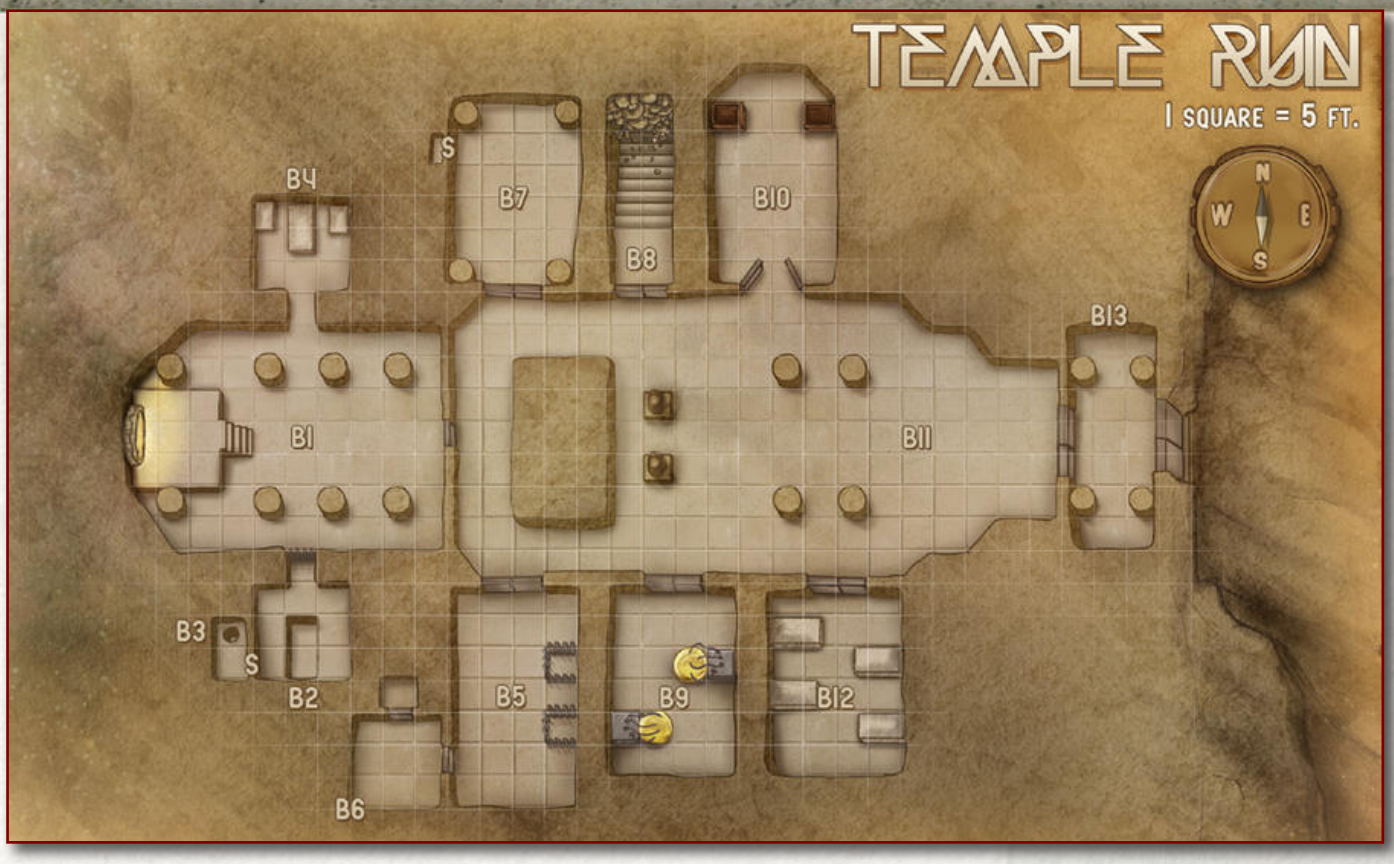
Each time you traverse an interplanetary gate, you automatically adapt and acclimate to a new world.

Prerequisite: Player character (or heroic NPC, at GM's discretion)

Benefit: When passing through an interplanetary gate, you experience an instantaneous and permanent physical transformation to facilitate survival on a new world. This includes environmental compatibility with the local atmosphere (as determined by the planetary atmosphere at the time of the gate's crafting, but not the ability to survive in a hard vacuum). You also acclimate to local diseases, such that you still prove susceptible to disease, but retain no special vulnerability to alien pathogens on other worlds. You also learn the rudiments of the local Common language, speaking, reading, and writing a passable dialect (though this may not become evident until interacting with a given world's native inhabitants). When you pass through a gate to another planet, these benefits are lost or exchanged for acclimation to the new world.

When the PCs emerge from the gate, they find themselves in an ancient ruin on the planet Argosa. In a time beyond living memory, Argosa held prominence as a Patron planet, but eventually suffered the ravages of war until immigrants and squatters from other worlds resettled and claimed it. As a hub planet, Argosa continues to hold many gates capable of reaching other parts of the galaxy, most of them located in Argosa's largest city, Zel-Argose. The PCs' arrival point lies approximately 50 miles east of Zel-Argose, which represents the most likely place for the PCs to search for answers to their current dilemma. Unfortunately, a religious sect of the Hegemony, known as the Scions of the Celestial Helix, have also established a lair within the same ruins, using the site to secretly extend their reach beyond Argosa to other planets they haven't explored or conquered yet (such as Garsilt).

Zel-Argose is also where the jagladine prison commander, Lomrick, went to report to his superiors about the deteriorating situation on Garsilt due to the unexpected meteor strike. As mentioned in Lomrick's laboratory notes, he's already aware of the unique genetic make-up represented by the races of the PCs. And, even though they escaped his prison, Lomrick's main priority is to repair the gate on Garsilt so he can travel back to their homeworld and search for others like them. The jagladine's agents have already identified an elali scholar named Relstanna as a known member of the Bellianic Accord living somewhere



in Zel-Argose, and Lomrick intends to capture her under the belief she knows how to repair the ancient gateways of the Patrons. Lomrick originally left Maulvorge in charge of this remote Hegemony base with standing orders to purge the prison on Garsilt if and when the gate stabilized. Most of the klaven footsoldiers accompanied Maulvorge in this endeavor, leaving only a handful of remaining guards and other hazards for the PCs to contend with in the ruins. While this location somewhat extends Part One, with care and caution, the PCs should be able to seize control of the ruins, rest, recover, and eventually obtain transportation to Zel-Argose.

B1. The Temple Gate

The vaulted ceiling of this expansive hall reaches 25-feet high along its centerline with six, enormous pillars running parallel to the east and west. A mild chill pervades the finished, yet ancient, stonework, and a series of ropes strung with metallic rods provide dim illumination across the entire chamber. A dais occupies the western end of the hall, flanked by another set of pillars. It rises five feet higher than the main floor with a short flight of steps leading to its surface where a crumbled altar lies in a broken heap along its northeast corner. Against the west wall stands an immense sculpture of a god-like figure depicting a female humanoid shaped so she leans out from the wall from the torso up, just behind the dais. The arms of this massive figure are carved so she appears to hold a stone circle surrounded by runes set in the center of the wall. A door exits east, the south hallway is closed off with the bars of a cell door, and an open passage leads to a smaller chamber to the north.

When the PCs first arrive in this chamber, they emerge from the stone circle surrounded by the arms of the giant sculpture. Their physical senses soon register subtle differences due to their new Morphic Nature. The gravity, barometric pressure, and humidity are all slightly different on Argosa, and the air carries a slight, coppery tang. These subtle clues indicate the PCs have shifted to a completely new environment. The barred door to the south is a makeshift structure, fabricated with metal rods fused together and fashioned with crude hinges. If the robot BR-N3R is still with the party, the construct can volunteer it played a role in fashioning the door (and other cells within the compound) with its plasma torch and materials which Lomrick provided. The door is designed to contain creatures in area **B2** (hardness 10, HP 40, break DC 25) and secured with a latch just out of reach for a Medium creature. The door to the east is closed but unlocked.

If the PCs investigate the gate through which they arrived, it radiates a strong aura of conjuration magic, but no effort within their means can cause it to activate again. While not permanently destroyed, its repair is well beyond the talents of anyone in the region, despite Lomrick's beliefs to the contrary.

Creature: Baeden Rhydorn (NG human male soldier) actually resides in area **B2**, but when the PCs arrive he peers through the gaps in the bars of his cell's metal door to see who steps from the gate (which makes a momentary flash of light when activated). He studies the PCs before eventually calling out to them, encouraging them to approach his cell in the hopes that they might free him. Note, this represents

the first instance where the PCs may hear someone speaking the Common language of Argosa, and yet, because of their Morphic Nature, they can understand the words.

Baeden and his older brother Caeftin (NG human male soldier) are traders who run caravans between Dae-Gelose and Zel-Argose, stopping at some of the smaller towns and villages in between. Lomrick hired the brothers to transport him and his klaven to these remote ruins to seek out the gate to Garsilt. Their decision to accept Lomrick's proposal created a lot of controversy among their hirelings, as jagladine are not well-liked on Argosa, and klaven (though nominally considered slaves) strike fear in those they encounter, proving bad for business. Lomrick offered a generous sum in compensation, however, so the brothers eventually accepted and even helped resupply the Hegemony outpost without incident. Unfortunately, when their caravan last stopped at the site, Lomrick needed immediate transportation back to Zel-Argose so he could find someone to repair the gate on Garsilt. He directed his klaven to seize the entire caravan, taking Baeden hostage with assurances to his brother Caeftin that he'd be unharmed and paid a bonus, so long as Caeftin turned the caravan back to Zel-Argose and delivered the jagladine safely to the city again. In the meantime, the remaining klaven occupying the ruins have seen to Baeden's basic needs, but they keep him confined to the room where the PCs find him now. After the trader tells them his story, he asks the PCs to free him.

Development: If Baeden and the PCs come to an agreement, he explains Lomrick's deal and that he no longer wants any part of it. Instead, he intends to rejoin his brother in Zel-Argose and offers that Lomrick has gone there, as well. He explains his brother's caravan is due to arrive again soon, presumably to pick him up again, provided Lomrick's klaven actually release him and don't slaughter their retainers instead. If the PCs agree to help Baeden escape and ensure the safety of his workers, he vows to take them to Zel-Argose when he leaves. Baeden also warns them about the klaven guards still in the temple ruins. Since the PCs may require rest after their ordeal on Garsilt, he suggests they hide in area **B4** or rig his cell door so it can be opened from within while they hide in his quarters. He assures them the resident klaven don't patrol rooms they already believe to be secure and only check the gate and their prisoner once or twice a day.

If the PCs successfully befriend Baeden and rest before exploring further, grant them a 1,200 XP story award.

B2. Purification Chamber (CR 1)

The floor of this chamber lies tiled in black marble, apparently swept clean and kept well-polished. Stone hooks hang from the wall at shoulder height, large enough to hang garments, and the center of the room includes a 10-foot-long basin which sits two feet lower than the main floor, empty now except for a few blankets and a bedroll. The room is otherwise empty except for a backpack, covered pot, and a half-dozen candle tubs. The only exit lies north through a makeshift cell door.

This used to be a ceremonial chamber where supplicants to the lost goddess were baptized or cleansed before a ritual. Closer examination of the basin reveals a stopper and a drain, but no source of water. A secret door in the west wall provides access to area **B3**, and a successful DC 20 Perception check can determine how it opens.

Creature: The klaven guards have currently confined Baeden Rhydorn (see area **B1**) to this chamber. He uses the basin as a bed, and the covered pot as a chamber pot. The backpack is likewise his, but his captors removed most of its contents, leaving only a few minor implements, like a hygiene kit, flashlight, lantern, eating utensils, and a well-worn canteen. Baeden has been stripped of his weapons and has yet to find the secret door to **B3**.

BAEDEN RHYDORN **CR 1**

XP 400

Male human soldier

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Perception** +5

DEFENSE HP 20

EAC 11; **KAC** 13

Fort +3; **Ref** +3; **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee thunderstrike pulse gauntlet +8 (1d6+5 B & So; critical knockdown)

Ranged azimuth laser rifle +5 (1d8+1 F; critical burn 1d6) or shock grenade I +5 (explode [15 ft., 1d8 E, DC 11])

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (guard)

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Bluff +5, Intimidate +10, Survival +5

Feats Bodyguard, Diehard

Languages Common (Argosa)

Other Abilities armor training

Gear Argosan caravan armor (treat as lashunta ringwear I), azimuth laser rifle with battery (20 charges), thunderstrike pulse gauntlet with battery (20 charges), shock grenades I (2)

B3. Well of Purity

This small chamber conceals a well descending into darkness. A row of stone shelves hang upon the west wall.

This room once provided much-needed water for the temple and the adjoining purification chamber. Any apparatus used to fill containers from the well has long since fallen to dust. If the PCs lower their own container into the well and pull it back up, it yields clean, drinkable water. Exploring the well itself requires a successful DC 15 Athletics check to climb, and leads to an underground cistern fed by small pipes from an aquifer somewhere beneath the mountain.

Treasure: The stone shelves once held religious artifacts important to the temple, most of which have crumbled away, but a golden chalice worth 200 credits and a *gem of recall* (see page 66) still remain.

B4. Preparation Chamber

A long, stone table occupies this rectangular room, covered in dust and set with one end emerging from the center of the north wall. Flanking the table are two smaller work surfaces holding and two, bronze urns, tinted green with time. All of the room's walls bear a series of etchings once painted with bright colors to stand out from the black stone, but now faded and crumbling away. The only exit lies south.

The temple clergy once used this chamber to prepare their dead for various funerary rites. The etchings depict this lost culture's instructions for proper burial, and a successful DC 13 Culture or Mysticism check allows any PC to divine their purpose. A successful DC 10 Perception check also notices something disturbed the dusty table in the recent past, but not within the past few weeks. The klaven are aware of this room but generally ignore it.

Treasure: The brass urns are worth 50 credits each, but is 15 bulk, making them difficult to move. Baeden's weapons can be found here, as the klaven felt this unused room was an appropriate place to keep their prisoner's weaponry safely away from him.

B5. Communal Room

Rubble covers the floor of this solemn chamber, except for the cleared areas within two metal cages standing empty along the east wall. The air has a decidedly musty smell as heaps of sawdust lay in piles around the cages. Two stone doors exit north, and a single door leads west.

This room once served as a communal dining and meeting hall for the temple priests. The stone rubble represents the remains of several broken tables and benches, some bearing artistic designs matching the rest of the runes and symbology used in the temple's architecture. The metal cages act as makeshift prison cells crafted from metal rods which BR-N3R welded together. The cells (hardness 10, HP 40, break DC 25) lie empty but new chains and metal padlocks were recently added from Zel-Argose, and require a DC 25 Engineering check to open. Lomrick uses these cells to detain prisoners which he can infect with the assimilation virus to create replacement klaven as required.

B6. Kitchen and Pantry

The two chambers west of **B5** once provided a kitchen and pantry. Currently, it holds several crates and barrels filled with dried, salted meats, water, and other long-lasting provisions (treat as the equivalent of 100 days of field rations).

B7. Library of Dust (CR 3)

Four immense pillars stand in the corners of this room, each one decorated with patterns of stars and outlined in unusual constellations. Shelves line every wall except for the southern side of the chamber, but any books once stored here have long deteriorated into piles of dust and debris, spilling to the floor. As a result, several footprints appear along the floor, passing among broken, discarded stone tablets and unsealed scroll tubes.

The temple priests kept a large library here, an area which Lomrick has picked over many times and sold or passed on any surviving works to his peers in the Hegemony. He overlooked a secret compartment, however, hidden at the base of one of the western shelves (discovered with a successful DC 20 Perception check). The panel's presence is hidden among minute grooves of the constellations and stars depicted on the walls. The indelible, precise lines hiding the compartment depict two coin-sized circles and a smaller circle bisected by a curving line looping around the larger ones like an infinity symbol. Although the PCs won't realize it yet, this represents the Vendel system, with Argosa passing between its twin suns. If Baeden accompanies the PCs and they show him the carvings, he can explain Argosa's unique cosmology. If the PCs attempt to access the panel, they can pry it open with a successful DC 25 Disable Device check, or by simply pressing both sun symbols simultaneously followed by pressing the smaller circle representing Argosa.

Trap: The secret compartment is warded with an ancient trap to protect the prayer book; anyone attempting to open the secret panel is overwhelmed with a surge of mystical energy. A PC can notice the arcane markings indicating the ward with a successful DC 24 Perception check, and with a successful DC 19 Mysticism check can carefully alter the runes to render the effect inert. The ward also has a bypass mechanism, allowing a creature who utters the password "Vendel" immediately before opening the panel to do so without setting off the trap.

ANCIENT ENERGY TRAP **CR 3**

XP 800

Type magical; **Perception** DC 24; **Disable** Mysticism DC 19 (alter runes)

Trigger touch; **Reset** immediate; **Bypass** password (Vendel)

Effect *mind thrust* (2nd level; 4d10 damage; Will DC 14 half)

Treasure: Tucked within the secret compartment is an ancient prayer book constructed from thin gold plates. The book is worth 600 credits as an art object and for its historical value.

B8. Crumbled Stairs

A 10-foot-square landing lies behind the stone doors lead here. A flight of steps head downward, but come to a halt as a cave-in completely blocks further progress.

B9. Conversion Chamber

Two wooden tubs sit in the center of this room. Fashioned like giant vats, they're large enough to hold a human-sized creature. Behind them stand two, box-like contraptions with shelves of alchemical equipment and tubing which coil into the vats. The rest of the room contains piles of rubble, refuse, and dust swept into the corners, and a nauseating, coppery scent of chemicals and bodily fluids permeates the air. The only exit is a pair of double stone doors to the north.

Lomrick repurposed this room as another klaven conversion chamber (similar to one in the alien prison on Garsilt at area **A13**). This gives him a means of eliminating unwelcome visitors to the temple while also increasing his forces both within the ruins and for the prison on Garsilt. The vats are currently unfilled as the jagladine hasn't found time to create new klaven prior to his impromptu return to Zel-Argose and the PCs' escape. The PCs can destroy the apparatus with a few minutes of effort, though doing so will create considerable noise and spread the smell to other areas.

B10. Warbeast Pen (CR 4)

Double stone doors stand partially open to this room, leading to a long, rectangular chamber which carries the heavy musk of large animals cut with a peculiar scent of chemicals. The floor is swept clear of debris, save for the crumbled remains of ancient furniture shoved to the walls, each piece seemingly ready to collapse into dust. Gnawed bones strewn about the floor seem far more recent, however, and two troughs, each large enough for a horse, stand at the north end of the chamber.

Creatures: Lomrick allowed Maulvorge to keep additional warbeasts here, both as mounts and further guardians for the temple. As transformed klaven, the warbeasts do not adhere to normal animal behavior, allowing them to maintain their vigilance without getting bored or distracted. Programmed for total loyalty, they remain alert at all times, ready to respond to other klaven should their nanite exchange ability warn them of danger. They position themselves near the center of the room with the doors open, allowing their scent ability to extend up to 15 feet into area **B11**. This may allow the warbeasts to become aware of the PCs as they approach.

Development: If the warbeasts move within 60 feet of their allies in area **B13**, the klaven shocktroopers stationed there will automatically realize the warbeasts are engaged in battle and respond by entering the main temple in 1d4+1 rounds. Savvy PCs who observed this phenomenon in prior klaven encounters should realize this consequence—or an ally like Baeden, BR-N3R, or other NPCs may warn them. While shutting the chamber doors won't necessarily prevent such a nanite exchange, it can delay the response of additional klaven by an additional 2 rounds.

KLAVEN WARBEASTS (2) **CR 2**

XP 600 each

HP 25 each (see page 63)

TACTICS

During Combat The warbeasts always move to a new target if they reduce an opponent to an unconscious state. This helps in recapturing escaped prisoners and subduing other victims for interrogation and klaven transformation.

Morale The warbeasts fight fearlessly, tirelessly, and without concern for their own survival.

B11. Grand Hall

This enormous vestibule projects a sense of bygone majesty. Columns of large pillars run east and west to support a vaulted, stone roof rising 30-feet overhead, while a series of ornate, double stone doors line the north and south walls. A single stone door exits to the west and a larger stone gate to the east. The hall is also divided to the west where a 20-foot-high, rectangular block depicts an array of murals carved in bas-relief. A pair of stone statues, one male and one female, also stand before this monument. Together, both beckon viewers forward, deeper into the temple, each gesturing toward one of the two walkways next to the mural-covered block.

This vestibule once provided access to the temple's special chambers and lower levels, while also conveying a sense of reverence and majesty for the gate housed in area **B1**. The figures represented by the statues are tall and elegant, but startlingly smooth with indistinct features. If questioned, Baeden cannot identify them, but guesses they represent the "old ones", a precursor race which existed on Argosa before the wars between the Patrons and the Principalities.

A successful DC 15 Culture or Mysticism check aids in decoding the murals on the giant, rectangular block into a vague semblance of a narrative. They tell a story of the unknown Argosan species worshipping a group of "star spirits" which guided their culture through millennia of technological and spiritual advancements, until such time they created gates to other worlds and repeated their mentorship with additional cultures and races.

Treasure: No overt treasure exists in this location, as Lomrick and his agents have already removed anything valuable, either selling it to buyers in Zel-Argose or passing it on to his superiors in the Hegemony. Certain scholars in Zel-Argose would have further interest in examining the murals, statues, and carvings, a fact which Baeden freely shares. If the PCs have the presence of mind to make sketches or rubbings of the murals or other temple fixtures, they could sell them for up to 250 credits to the right buyer in town.

B12. Klaven Quarters

Four stone slabs extend from the east and west walls of this chamber, staggered with a clear path running between them. A small shrine stands in the southwest corner with simple, stone bowls—some filled with water—resting on the floor near a collection of metal tools and sharpening stones. A set of stone double doors exits north.

Lomrick set aside this room to provide living quarters for the handful of klaven stationed on this side of the gate. His foot-soldiers take their required rest here—although klaven often sleep standing up without the need for beds. The room's original purpose remains unclear, except the slabs do provide some elevation off the floor, and may once have allowed for further preparation of honored dead buried within the temple.

The shrine's object of worship is a divine emblem represented as a black flame on a winged helmet (which matches the symbol the PCs may have noticed on Maulvorge's armor). A secondary symbol—a scarlet-colored helix that bisects a black sphere—also features prominently. The shrine is actually a portable altar, and radiates as evil to any divination spells. A successful DC 15 Mysticism check may also determine the portfolios of evil and war feature in the doctrine represented by such symbology.

Treasure: A successful DC 20 Perception check discovers a secret compartment concealed at the base of the shrine. It contains two *spell amps of mystic cure* (1st level), a *spell gem of lesser restoration*, and a small pouch containing 5 credsticks with 100 credits each. Lomrick set aside these items as payment for the Rhydorn brothers as long as they remained obedient to his wishes.

Development: While the adventure assumes this room is empty, the klaven guards at area **B13** may optionally appear here. This would likely occur during their rest period and one of the warbeasts from area **B10** would take their place at area **B13**.

B13. Temple Foyer (CR 4)

Twin pillars flank a matching set of double doors to the east and west, each one bearing enscribed constellations of unknown stars. Images of tall, graceful humanoids with smooth, indistinct features are carved in bas-relief among them. The engravings coil around the pillars as if in the throes of an elaborate aerial dance ascending towards some celestial destination above. A thick layer of dust covers the north and south ends of this foyer, but a clear area between the two doorways indicates a frequently-walked path. The air is both dry and fresh here.

Creatures: Two klaven shocktroopers normally guard the ruin entrance here, stationed just outside the eastern doors in anticipation of Lomrick's return with the Rhydorn caravan from Zel-Argose. This puts the shocktroopers just outside the 60-ft range of the nanites used to sense their fellow klaven in the temple, creating a tactical incentive for the PCs to confine the warbeasts to area **B10** rather than moving into the Grand Hall (at area **B11**).

KLAVEN SHOCKTROOPERS (2) **CR 2**

XP 600 each

Klaven soldier (see page 61)

HP 25 each

The Road to Zel-Argose

Soon after the PCs take control of the ruined temple, Caeftin Rhydorn should arrive with his brother's caravan from Zel-Argose. He fully anticipates trouble in securing Baeden's release, despite Lomrick's assurances to the contrary. In addition to bringing enough goods to resupply the Hegemony outpost, he also hides a group of mercenaries among his handlers, all of them hired from the Dorgelf Coterie of Zel-Argose and prepared to assault the Hegemony compound, if necessary. The adventure assumes a peaceful encounter with Caeftin, who proves genuinely grateful if the PCs release his brother to him unharmed. Thereafter, the pair can help bridge any gaps in the PCs' knowledge of Argosa and their current predicament. If engaged in diplomatic conversation, they can share the following information:

- The ruins in which the PCs arrived were controlled by a jagladine named Lomrick (a name which the PCs should recall from the journals in areas **A9**, **A11**, **A15**, and the mentioned in the recordings in area **A21**). They also identify Lomrick as an agent of the Ultari Hegemony, and can physically describe what jagladine look like, but they know very little about the jagladine species overall.

- Caeftin knows Lomrick joined another group of klaven stationed in Zel-Argose after being forced to take him there, but has no idea what became of the jagladine after they parted ways. He describes Zel-Argose as a rough trading city approximately 50 miles west of their current location. Zel-Argose prizes trade above all else, and maintains strict laws against anyone interfering with the city's commerce. The Rhydorn brothers also explain their business relationship with Lomrick and how the jagladine betrayed them—they believe in order to keep knowledge of the ruins a secret, "because the ruins hold a currently unexplored gateway."
- If the PCs explain they come from another world, the Rhydorn brothers seem unfazed. They identify their world as Argosa and explain that off-worlders come and go from this planet on a regular basis. In fact, Zel-Argose has twelve major gates, all leading to more inhabited worlds. So, the concept of gates to other planets is commonplace to the people of Argosa, but the brothers acknowledge that powerful groups—known as the Coteries—usually control them. Thus, a hitherto unknown gate is a secret well worth keeping.

The information the brothers provide still has its limits. Primarily, this social encounter should serve to give the PCs a clear direction for where to go to ensure their survival, and present the next step in their investigation, even if their main goal is simply to return home again. Baeden explains that Zel-Argose is best experienced rather than described, and the brothers readily offer to take them there to aid their cause and repay them for freeing Baeden. They only ask that the heroes leave out their names if anyone asks how they arrived in the city. After smuggling the PCs past the city guards, the Rhydorns plan to steer clear of Zel-Argose for some time to come. The journey to Zel-Argose covers 50 miles of sandy, rocky terrain, and the dozen or so sand-scoured caravan vehicles (treat as exploration buggies) can make the journey in about a day.

Part 3: The Gateway City

The adventure becomes much more open-ended at this point, as the PCs find themselves suddenly immersed in the culture, clamor, commerce, and corruption of the alien metropolis of Zel-Argose, a crossroads city on a planet at the nexus of a vast network of interstellar gateways inherited from ancient progenitor races. Power and wealth in the city flow through these gates and into the hands of those that control them, and for the PCs to have any chance of returning home or bringing the former captor to justice, they will need to investigate the city and make it at least a temporary home, becoming a part of this multispecies melting pot and using their ingenuity, cunning, and courage to make allies, uncover clues, and chase down leads to find their way on this new world.

During the caravan's approach to Zel-Argose, read or paraphrase the following description to the players:

A strange city appears on the horizon, nestled in the foothills of a large mountain range. Even from this distance, the glimmer of a swift-flowing river runs through its center, swelled to capacity as a by-product of the nearby snow-covered peaks. The city itself displays a patchwork of differing architectural styles and incongruous structures. Colossal monuments, many defying description, tower over more modest construction, but no walls surround this metropolis as it flows outward onto a vast plain of seasonal farmland.

Prior to this point, *To Worlds Unknown* follows a fairly linear path in respect to the PCs' choices and the direction of the story. For example, following their abduction, the heroes first had to secure their liberty and now they travel to Zel-Argose in search of answers, as well as the basic knowledge, goods, and services to ensure their survival on an alien world. The remainder of Part Two concerns itself with acclimating the PCs to this environment, especially the uniqueness of Zel-Argose as a strange city with an endless variety of cultural differences which they may return to frequently throughout the campaign. Fortunately, due to their Morphic Nature feat, the heroes have the advantage of a common language with the local inhabitants, but full adaptation never proves that simple. Instead, the Legendary Worlds Adventure Path continues to perpetuate a *Lost In Space* element to it with the long-term goal of the PCs searching for a way home again. Eventually, however, the heroes should come to the realization that they face further problems with the Hegemony, as their abductors will eventually find their way to the PCs' homeworld unless stopped. The following sections each relate different episodes for how the PCs begin to adapt to this new world, and how they eventually confront the entities responsible for their abduction.

Commerce

Zel-Argose is a large enough metropolis that its currency is based on the credit, like most major cities accessible through the network of gates. It has a strong economy with diverse supplies and materials brought from all across the multiverse through its interplanetary gates. Furthermore, with a steady flow of off-world visitors, city merchants are accustomed to handling strange credsticks from far-off places. As a result, the PCs should have no issues finding a market for their accumulated wealth or tradegoods.

Gathering Information, Professions, and Lifestyle

When the PCs first arrive, you should temporarily suspend the use of the Culture skill as it pertains to the local society. The heroes simply do not have a frame of reference to use this skill on Argosa yet. Culture checks can still prove useful

in other situations. The heroes can also gather information with use of the Diplomacy skill without hindrance, as this only requires the ability to interact with others. While restricting skills runs the risk of limiting the fun at the table (especially when players have substantially invested in them for their characters), this should more accurately reflect the newness of the PCs' situation, and it should prove only temporary until they spend more time exploring Zel-Argose. In addition, several short-term alternatives exist for characters who want to interact and learn more about their new environs as soon as possible. After 1 week in Zel-Argose, a PC can attempt Culture checks at a –5 penalty. For each week thereafter, the GM should reduce the penalty by 1, or even more rapidly to reward excellent roleplay with native inhabitants or a PC who makes a concentrated effort to broaden their knowledge through extra skill points as they gain a level. Thus, within a month, the PCs should be able to once again use their skills unimpeded.

Enterprising PCs may also think to use their Profession skills to support themselves in their new community. This not only brings in money in the local currency (credits), but most Professions also encourage interaction with the native inhabitants, including customers, employers, and co-workers. Consequently, while they acclimate to Argosa, PCs can use their Profession skills in place of certain Culture checks. Furthermore, every week spent applying themselves to a Profession reduces the restriction on Culture checks by 1 week.

To ingrain the challenges of their current situation, it's recommended that the PCs be charged a daily amount for lodging and food, as described in the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*. The objective here shouldn't strive to drain away all of the PCs' funds, but to create a definite sense of urgency and tension while encouraging them to explore Zel-Argose and integrate themselves into its society. As a result, this could lead to further city-based encounters (whether as suggested in the sections which follow, or as the GM devises on their own).

Finding Lomrick

Finding Lomrick may be quite high on the PCs' list of objectives after arriving in Zel-Argose. Jagladine are somewhat uncommon on Argosa, let alone Zel-Argose, and their inhuman appearance makes them stand out more than most. These characteristics should make a jagladine easier to track down, but Lomrick keeps a low profile as an agent of the Hegemony and the Scions of the Celestial Helix. He prefers to act through intermediaries and proxies while in the city, and he's well-financed enough for certain Coteries to indulge his secrets and his privacy. As a result, Lomrick seldom mingles with anyone, except in the highest strata of the city's social elite. These circumstances mean that few citizens on the street have any awareness or common knowledge of Lomrick's business, but those who travel in higher circles may assuredly know something about him.

A successful DC 30 Culture check or Diplomacy check to gather information (without the benefit of taking 20) ascertains the whereabouts of Lomrick's manse in Zel-Argose. This Culture check is almost impossible for the first few weeks, and the PCs are also unlikely to succeed at the Diplomacy check, especially with the restrictions described above. Eventually, however, as the PCs acclimate to the city over time, this effort becomes easier. Furthermore, Lomrick's whereabouts are not strictly a matter of luck. Two of the city-based encounters which follow (i.e., the "Coterie Conflict" and "Weave Runner") provide opportunities for solid intelligence on the jagladine's urban hideout without any skill checks. These specific encounters also provide more information on his current activities, and they should encourage further exploration of Zel-Argose while providing flexible options for how the GM introduces Part 3 of the adventure.

Dirty Deals (CR 5)

Few vices exist in the city, but interference with trade is strictly prohibited. While this rule seems straightforward, a few social elements strive to complicate things. As a result, this encounter takes place anywhere off a main thoroughfare or well-traveled area in Zel-Argose. Recently, a local gang called the Redfists has started to supply narcotics to the children of an enclave of workers from the water treatment plant. When the parents and allied community members attempted to police their neighborhood, the gang retaliated by citing the laws against interfering with trade. This argument has no legal basis, however, as even the Coteries refuse to enforce such laws if they prevent parents from protecting their children under the age of consent. Nevertheless, the quiet intimidation of the Redfists continues until someone confronts them.

The PCs may become involved in this conflict in multiple ways. They could happen upon four Redfists circling a pair of workers on their way back from the water treatment facility. Alternately, they might overhear of the shakedowns and threats perpetrated by the gang by anyone they've befriended, thereby choosing to investigate. Or, the neighborhood may even hire the PCs as mercenaries to send a message to the gang and eliminate the threat they pose. The GM is free to determine the set-up that best works for the campaign given any actions the PCs may have taken to settle into the city. If the PCs succeed in opposing the gang members, the Redfists abandon the neighborhood and relocate to a different part of the city. The grateful community offers a reward of 200 credits for making their troubles go away, but future altercations with the Redfists could follow if the PCs wander into Redfist territory again.

Slavery and Zel-Argose

The issue of slavery has its own subtle complexities in Zel-Argose. While legal, the city's Auditor and ruling Coteries frown on kidnapping for the purpose of forced enslavement. As a result, most slave traders import their stock through Argosa's interplanetary gates, and any klaven in service to the Hegemony are always considered slaves to their accompanying official (an official status which they care nothing about). All slaves except klaven bear a special brand, often augmented by a tattooed number or code to uniquely identify them and any agency granted by their owners. The only way an Argosan citizen can 'supposedly' become a slave is through an unpaid debt, and this change of status must be confirmed through the office of the Auditor—who prefers indentured servitude unless repayment of the debt is considered unlikely or insurmountable.

REDFIST PUSHERS (4) **CR 1**

XP 400 each

Human operative

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE HP 17 EACH

EAC 11; **KAC** 12

Fort +3; **Ref** +7; **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical baton +6 (1d4+1 B) or unarmed strike +6 (1d4+1 B)

Ranged needler pistol +4 (1d4+1 P plus green lotus extract; critical injection +2 DC)

Offensive Abilities trick attack +1d4

TACTICS

During Combat Street thugs fight dirty, pairing up to flank opponents, poisoning them from afar, and using Bluff and Intimidate to make trick attacks.

Morale The Redfists have no belly for a prolonged fight. Once reduced to less than 5 Hit Points, or more than half their number falls to the PCs, they flee.

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +4; **Con** +0; **Int** +0; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +2

Skills Athletics +6, Bluff +6, Intimidate +11, Sleight of Hand +11, Stealth +6

Feats Improved Unarmed Strike

Languages Common (Argosan)

Other Abilities specialization (thief)

Gear second skin, needler pistol with 6 darts, tactical baton, green lotus extract (2 doses), credstick (13 credits)

Coliseum Confrontations (CR 5)

The Battle Pits of Zel-Argose actively recruit combatants to test their mettle in its arenas as an exotic form of entertainment for the masses, offering prizes to those who win, while also generating a fair degree of commerce on the wagering it fosters. The rewards for any given fight generally scale according to the degree of difficulty and assumed lethality. The GM may learn of this opportunity via posted notices or street recruiters near the Battle Pits who approach or call out to armed visitors such as the PCs. Should one of them accept such an opportunity, the recruiters indicate when and where to present themselves at the coliseum and how to prepare for each contest.

Creatures: Several matches can take place at the Battle Pits, and any coliseum or arena map (such as the laminated flip-mats available from Paizo Inc.) should suffice for running an encounter. The showrunners schedule the PCs to battle a variety of random and exotic creatures. Each statblock below represents a different match, and assumes the PCs fight together as a unit. The prize for defeating a given opponent is equal to 400 credits per encounter CR, so 2,000 credits for each overall CR 5 encounter. Slaying the creatures is optional, but certainly plays to the crowd's bloodlust. The Battle Pits would prefer to retain their beasts and gladiators for future matches, however, and privately offer the PCs an additional 200 credits if they can subdue their opponents instead. If the fight plays out in a particularly spectacular fashion, the PCs may also earn a degree of notoriety among Argosans who closely follow the bloodsport, granting them a +2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidate checks with such individuals.

ARMORED WARRIORS (4) CR 1

XP 400 each

Human soldier

HP 20 each (use the statistics for Baeden Rhydorn on page 28)

SKEVILLS (2) CR 3

XP 800 each

N Medium vermin

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +0

Aura static aura (15 ft., DC 12)

DEFENSE HP 40 EACH

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +2

Immunities electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +11 (1d6+7 E & P)

Ranged static pulse +8 (1d4+3 E; critical arc 1d4)

TACTICS

During Combat The skevills in the arena have been prodded and antagonized; they lash out at nearby foes with their bite attack and launch static pulses at enemies further away.

Morale A skevill that goes for a few rounds without taking damage forgets about the combat and tries to wander off, often climbing into the spectator stands or up other features of the arena.

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** —; **Wis** +0; **Cha** –2

Other Abilities mindless

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Static Aura (Ex) A skevill emits an aura of static around itself to a radius of 15 feet. Every round, this energy coalesces around one creature at random in the area (including the skevill and other skevills in the area, though these creatures are unharmed due to their immunity to electricity), dealing 1d4 electricity damage (Reflex DC 12 half).

THASKS (2) **CR 3**

XP 800 each

CN Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +13

DEFENSE HP 40 EACH

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities defensive spines

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee claw +12 (1d6+7 S plus thask nerotoxin) or bite +12 (1d6+7 P)

Offensive Abilities spiny grapple, thask neurotoxin

TACTICS

During Combat Thasks are fierce fighters well aware of the benefits their spines provide them. They rush into melee and seek to get close to their foes, targeting those using unarmed strikes or who seem less able to avoid their spiny grapple.

Morale Tasks are vicious, but the team here has a standing reputation as arena favorites and will submit if reduced below 5 Hit Points.

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** –1

Skills Intimidate +8, Survival +8

Languages Common (Argosan), Thask

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Defensive Spines (Ex) The needle-like spines covering a thask's body contain a mild neurotoxin and provide it with protection against attacks. A creature that strikes the thask with an unarmed strike or natural attack or grapples a thask takes 1d4 piercing damage and is exposed to thask neurotoxin.

Spiny Grapple (Ex) Each round a thask grapples its opponents, it can writhe and twist to pierce its foes with its toxic spines, exposing them to thask neurotoxin.

Thask Neurotoxin (Ex) A creature exposed to the mild neurotoxin from a thask's spines must succeed at a DC 12 Fortitude save or gain the sickened condition for 1 round. Repeated exposure does not worsen this effect.

STANDING ARENA CHAMPION **CR 5**

XP 1,600

Human soldier

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; **Senses** special senses alphabetized; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE HP 70

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +7; **Ref** +7; **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 35 ft.

Melee tactical swoop hammer +14 (1d10+12 B; critical knockdown)

Ranged static arc rifle +11 (1d12+5 E; critical arc 1d6) or smoke grenade I +11 (explode [20 ft., smoke cloud 1 min., DC 13]) or stickybomb grenade II +11 (explode [15 ft., entangled 2d4 rounds, DC 15])

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with swoop hammer)

Offensive Abilities charge attack, fighting styles (blitz)

TACTICS

During Combat The champion is typically engaged in combat for show, not survival, and prefers nonlethal tactics when possible, using his grenades to debilitate his foes and engaging the stun mode on his static arc rifle.

Morale This gladiator fights to live another day, and while fighting in the arena will submit if reduced below 10 HP.

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +3; **Con** +2; **Int** –1; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +1

Skills Bluff +11, Intimidate +11, Profession (gladiator) +16

Feats Cleave, Diehard

Languages Common (Argosan)

Other Abilities add all non-combat abilities here, listed alphabetically

Gear Argosan decorative armor (treat as lashunta ringwear II), tactical swoop hammer, static arc rifle with high-capacity battery (40 charges), smoke grenades I (2), stickybomb grenades II (2)

The Coterie Conflict

The Coteries of Zel-Argose outwardly give the impression that the city's Auditor governs the people, and that they all stand in unity behind her. This is only half-true. In reality, the Auditor rules at the sufferance of the Coteries who frequently break their own rules to engage in secret conflicts with one another. They do, however, take great pains to ensure such intrigue remains outside the public awareness whenever possible. The seat of every Coterie's power is primarily invested in their massive estates, which usually protect at least one or more valuable gates to other worlds. Yet, each Coterie's holdings reach far beyond these important compounds, as they maintain hiding places and safehouses across the city and Argosa's hinterlands, as well. Often, these facilities host offworld guests and important traders, quarter various garrisons and training grounds for reinforcements, or serve as collection points for valuable tradegoods manufactured on Argosa.

Recently, a powerful gang has given rise to the newly-formed Daytaar Coterie by raiding the storehouses of the more powerful Avaar Coterie with the aid of an inside informant. The Avaar leadership suffered a great loss of face over this incident, and after dealing with the traitor in their ranks, now privately seek to repay the upstart Daytaar for their affront. Avaar's contacts have finally discovered the location of a Daytaar safehouse and they're looking to hire an unaffiliated band of mercenaries—such as the PCs—to deal with the problem. The adventure assumes the PCs somehow come to the attention of the Avaar Coterie as potential recruits for this task, whether by garnering a reputation for themselves in the Battle Pits, or through tales of their exploits

which friendly NPCs (such as Andretta or the Rhydorn brothers) may have passed on to an Avaar agent. Another way to involve the PCs could hinge on their search for Lomrick. The Avaar Coterie may have valuable information obtained through their underworld contacts and offer to exchange Lomrick's whereabouts (and supplemental looting rights of the Daytaar compound) if the PCs carry out their revenge.

The entrance to the Daytaar safehouse lies hidden in a seldom-trafficked public area, concealed behind a cenotaph dedicated to an ancient warlord named Valdo-Char who defended Zel-Argose from off-world threats long before the Coteries rose to power. Lost to history, this monument normally receives no visitors, with trees and shrubs having overgrown its paved concourse.

C1. Cenotaph of Valdo-Char

An ancient stone cenotaph stands here at the end of the street, flanked by a pair of large trees and surrounded by a thicket of overgrown shrubbery. The rectangular structure bears the weight of a crumbling statue representing a bearded warlord raising a stone spear towards the sky. The name, Valdo-Char, appears as an inscription on the monument's facing in large letters.

PCs who succeed at a DC 10 Culture check, or who gather information via a Diplomacy check, may learn that Valdo-Char was one of Zel-Argose's earlier rulers before the Coteries rose to power. He successfully defended the city from a succession of invaders during his reign, including barbaric nomads and a race of mysterious, bat-winged humanoids long since vanished from any known region of Argosa. These deeds notwithstanding, the warlord has little context in the Argosan society today. The structure has suffered multiple attempts to vandalize it over the years, but seldom sees visitors any longer. A successful DC 20 Perception or Survival check by any PC examining the monument locates recent tracks which lead behind the cenotaph and places where someone has cleared the vegetation for easier passage. A successful DC 25 Perception check by anyone investigating this area reveals a secret door at the back of the monument. It also bears a lock (DC 25 Engineering to open).

C2. Hidden Stairs (CR 2)

A small landing waits behind the secret door, leading to an earthen staircase descending to the west. Stray tree roots have burst through the hard-packed ceiling overhead, and another five-foot landing marks a second stairway as the passage turns north.

Trap: A simple magical trap wards the cenotaph's entrance, placed on the second landing. PCs can detect the trap with a successful DC 23 Perception check, and either disarm its physical components with a successful DC 18 Engineering check or undermine the magic with a successful DC 18 Mysticism check. If unnoticed, the effect silently alerts the Daytaar spellcaster Laystra (see areas **C3** and **C4a**).

C3. Guard Room (CR 5)

This simple room has a single door leading north and a staircase to the south. A pair of sconces in the northeast corners hold two elaborate light fixtures providing illumination.

The Daytaar Coterie uses this room as a staging area for posted guards hidden in the adjacent rooms (see areas **C4a** and **C4b**). The coterie keeps the northern door locked (DC 25 Engineering to disable the lock), but the secret doors next to it are not, requiring only a successful DC 20 Perception check to locate. Each of the secret doors also contains a concealed peephole for spying from the adjacent rooms. If the PCs locate a secret door, they also find its corresponding peephole.

Creatures: Daytaar operatives watch over this room from behind the secret doors leading to areas **C4a** and **C4b**. If the PCs failed to bypass the alarm trap in area **C2**, they pull a chain to ring a small bell to alert everyone in the rest of the compound to the presence of intruders. Laystra and her thugs then position themselves at the peepholes before kicking open the secret doors and attacking anyone entering here. Treat this as not requiring an action so the gang members can still take an action in the surprise round. Bear in mind that aside from the movement required to enter the room, Perception checks to search (such as looking for secret doors) are move actions, and disabling a lock takes 1 round, so the villains should have ample time to spring their ambush.

DAYTAAR AGENTS (2) **CR 1**

XP 400 each

Human operative (use the statistics for Redfist Pushers on page 34)

HP 17 each

Ranged tactical semi-auto pistol +4 (1d6+1 P)

Gear instead of needler pistols and green lotus extract, these thugs each carry a tactical semi-auto pistol with 12 small arm rounds

LAYSTRA **CR 3**

XP 800

Female human (Argosan) mystic

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Perception** +4

DEFENSE HP 32 RP 3

EAC 13; **KAC** 14

Fort +2; **Ref** +4; **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *called tactical spear* +7 (1d6+2 P)

Ranged *called tactical spear* +5 (1d6+1 P)

Offensive Abilities forced amity (DC 14), inexplicable commands

Mystic Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd)

At will—*mindlink*

Mystic Spells Known (CL 3rd; ranged +5)

1st (3/day)—*command* (DC 16), *mind thrust* (DC 16)

0 (at will)—*psychokinetic hand*, *telekinetic projectile*

TACTICS

During Combat Laystra first tries to convince enemies to leave or submit through her forced amity ability and castings of *command*. If that fails, she reverts to force, preferring to fight with *telekinetic projectile* but reverting to her spear if necessary.

Morale Laystra becomes shaken if reduced to 6 Hit Points or less, and surrenders if the PCs agree to spare her life and shield her from further reprisals by the Avaar Coterie. In exchange, she offers all her remaining gear and her services as an informant within the Coterie hierarchy.

STATISTICS

Str –1; **Dex** +1; **Con** +1; **Int** +0; **Wis** +4; **Cha** +2

Skills Culture +8, Diplomacy +13, Intimidate +13, Mysticism +8

Languages Common (Argosan)

Other Abilities add all non-combat abilities here, listed alphabetically

Gear casual stationwear, tactical spear (*calling fusion seal*), *mk 1 ring of resistance*, key to area **C3**, credstick (41 credits)

C4a and C4b. Guard Quarters

A simple cot with a mattress and blanket sits against the wall, along with empty wine cups and dirty plates with the remains of recently consumed meals. A wooden door painted grey to match the adjacent stonework leads south, while a small hole drilled through it sits at eye level. Another more traditional wooden door opposite the bed provides a different exit.

The description of this room applies to both areas **C4a** and **C4b**, which serve identical functions except that **C4b** also includes a slender chain which disappears into a hole in the ceiling. When yanked (as a move action), the rope chimes small bells hung in areas **C4a** and **C7**. Note, if the PCs experiment with the chain and don't understand its function, they may inadvertently warn the occupants of these rooms.

The southern exits are secret doors with peepholes into area **C3**. The doors are constructed from wood with a few inches of stone mortared onto the other side and carefully painted to match the walls of the outward chamber, but nothing conceals them from the interior side.

Creatures: The two thugs described in **C3** normally occupy room **C4a** and Laystra claims **C4b**. If the PCs thwart the trap in area **C2** these thugs may be encountered here instead.

Development: If the occupants of either room are attacked here, they cry out to warn the room across the dividing hallway. If the pull rope is pulled by anyone, the thugs in **C4a** check the peephole in their room for intruders if they haven't already been alerted or encountered, and then check on Laystra a few rounds later.

C5. Supply Room

This small room lies barren except for stacks of crates, boxes, and pallets which line the west wall. A solitary door exits east.

The crates in this room contain food and drink for the safehouse's residents. Worried that constant foot traffic in and out of the safehouse would surely betray its location to any casual observer, the Daytaar Coterie provisioned the hideout so its guardians could stay put as much as possible.

C6. Card Room

A small round table sits in the southeast corner of this room with a few chairs shoved under it. A deck of pasteboard playing cards covered with strange symbols lie strewn across the table's surface, along with several sheets of parchment. A single door exits to the west.

The Daytaar operatives shares communal meals and pass the time here when on an assignment. The playing cards are unusual to the PCs in that they feature strange creatures, races, and symbols, but the purpose and function vary little from similar decks of cards found on their own homeworld.

The parchment sheets detail several cargo manifests from recent traffic through the Avaar Coterie's gate, as well as intelligence they've collected on other rival coteries. These documents are worth 200 credits to any of the coteries operating in Zel-Argose, though selling them rather than returning them to Avaar will surely draw their ire.

C7. Veelan's Quarters (CR 5)

This spacious chamber contains a heavily-padded bed in the northwest corner and a punching bag hanging from the ceiling directly south of it. A strange mélange of body odor and machine oil permeates the air, and doors lead south and east.

Creatures: An android enforcer for the Daytaar Coterie named Veelan Iron-Armed claims this room whenever he passes through the safehouse. As a constructed humanoid, he has installed numerous augmentations and upgrades into his body and armor to make himself a formidable melee combatant. While the Coterie trusts Laystra to run the safehouse, they occasionally send Veelan to check on her and whatever valuable goods or information she might have obtained and concealed before eventually moving such valuable commodities elsewhere.

Bald, silver-limbed, and covered with tattoos and faintly-glowing circuitry, Veelan's appearance is striking. As a result, he leaves the safehouse sparingly whenever he visits, and focuses most of his attention on keeping fit with his punching bag. He doesn't hesitate to augment such workouts by attacking intruders, and fights to the death or until rendered unconscious.

Treasure: A hatch concealed beneath Veelan's bed (DC 20 Perception check to locate and a DC 25 Engineering check to unlock) contains a small unlocked chest with an engineering specialty tool kit (which Veelan uses to maintain his armor, augmentations, and upgrades) and 200 credits on an unmarked credstick.

Veelan's armor is a customized piece of work built up from a suit of golemforged plating II. It has been modified to include a second armor upgrade slot, which Veelan has used to install a purple force field armor upgrade. However, the kitbash approach to the armor's construction means that the upgrade can't be removed from the armor and used separately. Like all augmentations, his dermal plating cannot be sold or reused.

Development: Veelan remains steadfastly loyal to the Daytaar Coterie, but if rendered unconscious and revived, he may bargain for his life, especially if successfully demoralized with a successful Intimidate check. He can easily provide information which might prove useful to other coteries in Zel-Argose, or even information about Lomrick if the PCs ask about the jagladine.

If the PCs return the documents from area **C6** to the Avaar Coterie, they may receive similar information on Lomrick's whereabouts as part of their reward. Alternately, if the GM wishes to utilize all of the city-based encounters in Part Two of the adventure, the Avaar Coterie can reveal that Lomrick approached them with inquiries about an elali seer named Relstanna. While the jagladine recently took her prisoner, she also has a known associate, a catfolk woman named Kaetrix known to frequent an alien-friendly tavern called The Weave Runner.

The GM can also use this encounter to spin off additional side quests for the PCs. The Daytaar Coterie may seek revenge against them if anyone survives to identify those who raided the safehouse. Likewise, if the PCs attempt to sell Veelan's armor on the black market, questions may surface about the circumstances and identity of its original owner, particularly since Veelan had such a high profile as an enforcer for the Daytaar Coterie in Zel-Argose.

VEELAN IRON-ARMED **CR 5**

XP 1,600

Male android soldier

NE Medium humanoid (android)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE **HP 70**

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +7; **Ref** +7; **Will** +6; +2 vs. disease, mind-affecting effects, poison, and sleep

DR 1/—; **Resistances** cold 5, fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee thunderstrike pulse gauntlet +14 (1d6+12 B & So; critical knockdown)

Ranged frostbite-class zero rifle +11 (1d8+5 C; critical staggered [DC 15]) or

shock grenade II +11 (explode [15 ft., 1d12 E, DC 15])

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (armor storm), gear boosts (melee striker), hammer fist

TACTICS

During Combat Veelan's customized armor and various armor upgrades and augmentations make him a formidable foe in melee. He prefers to target foes with his pulse gauntlet, making full attacks if he's hitting his opponents easily.

Morale Veelan fights until slain or rendered unconscious.

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +3; **Con** +2 **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +16, Intimidate +11

Languages Common (Argosan)

Other Abilities constructed, enhanced tank, flat affect, upgrade slot (mk 1 thermal capacitor)

Gear custom armor (treat at golemforged plating II with an extra upgrade slot; purple force field [5 HP]), frostbite-class zero rifle with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges), thunderstrike pulse gauntlet with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges), shock grenades II (2), *mk 2 serum of healing*, keys to area **C3**, **C8**, and the secret hatch; **Augmentations** mk 1 dermal plating

C8. Guest Room and Cell

A small, iron-barred cell takes up the northwest corner of this sparse room, its door currently standing open. Inside, the floor is freshly swept and neatly folded blankets and sheets lie upon a small bed. Soft, dark metal plates have been bolted to the walls, floor, and ceiling of the surrounding room. A single door exits to the west, while a stylish light fixture is mounted nearby to provide light.

The Daytaar Coterie typically uses this room to conceal valuable prisoners they've kidnapped, but it sometimes serves as temporary quarters to hide someone before smuggling them out of Zel-Argose. The metal sheets on the walls contain a significant concentration of lead, which blocks the extrasensory and divination abilities of the Auditor and her agents. The cell door (hardness 10, HP 40, break DC 25) is currently unlocked, though Veelan holds the key.

D. The Weave Runner

Eventually the PC's investigations and efforts to find Lomrick must bear fruit. This encounter represents one of two city-based side quests wherein the PCs can obtain information pertaining to the jagladine's location. As described in Part Three, Lomrick has abducted a representative of the Bellianic Accord, a female elali named Relstanna, who he believes can repair the gate on Garsilt so he can continue preparations to invade the PC's homeworld. Relstanna has her own agents and intermediaries, however, including a catfolk ranger named Kaetrix. Since Relstanna went missing, Kaetrix has gone underground in an effort to find and rescue her, and she recently received a lead on Lomrick as the possible culprit. Unfortunately, in Zel-Argose, asking too many questions about Hegemony agents often draws their interest, as well. And, while Kaetrix can certainly help the PCs find their quarry, they'll have to reach her before Lomrick has her silenced.

The PCs may experience this encounter in varying ways. A search for Lomrick with a Culture or Diplomacy check (see "Finding Lomrick" on page 34) that fails by 5 or less may instead reveal that a female catfolk named Kaetrix has asked similar questions about the jagladine, and she often uses the Weave Runner tavern to arrange meetings with possible informants. If the PCs completed the "Coterie Conflict" encounter, they might also receive such insight as part of their reward for recovering the stolen crystals for the Avaar. Kaetrix may also independently learn of their shared interest in Lomrick, and approach for help in finding Relstanna. This final plot hook would have Kaetrix send the PCs a message asking them to meet at the Weave Runner to discuss their common interest and compare notes.

The Weave Runner is a dingy Argosan cantina primarily catering to off-world travelers, but occasionally drawing local interest, as well. Unless otherwise noted, all doors within the tavern are unlocked and count as wooden doors (hardness 5, HP 15, break DC 16). Magical panels light the bar area and the ceilings throughout each room, but provide only dim light within their area of illumination. As a result, unless creatures have darkvision or raise the light levels, all creatures have concealment and Stealth attempts always remain possible.

D1. Main Room (CR 5)

This dimly lit room features large, round tables with chairs positioned around them. The northwest corner includes a spacious bar lined with barstools. Behind it, large mirrors and shelves hold a variety of glasses and seemingly exotic liquors in a dizzying array of colors. Empty, worn, leather couches rest against the north and west walls, and an empty stage, suitable for musicians rises five feet above the main floor in the northeast corner. Double doors exit south and east, and a single door leads north.

The Weave Runner's tables are made from a heavy, solid wood, sturdy enough to easily hold the weight of a Medium creature. Their surfaces are 3 feet from the floor, and each is nearly 8 feet around. A successful DC 12 Strength check is sufficient to flip them over or move them aside, but it requires a move action. The exotic liquors, beers, and ales behind the bar range in price from a single credit to 50 credits and up for more colorful, imported specialties from off-world.

Creatures: Unfortunately for Kaetrix, Lomrick has already learned of her search for Relstanna, and he may even be aware of the PC's recent actions and intentions to find him, as well, if they've rolled poorly on any skill checks intended to gather information about him, or displayed a lack of discretion during their investigation. As a result, Lomrick intends to rid himself of anyone looking into the problem, and does so through the proxy of another local gang.

The Skaardorn Skulks represent a family of ysoki which settled in Zel-Argose generations ago. The entire gang is related to one another to varying degrees, and, while klaven are normally Lomrick's preferred weapon of choice in violent confrontations, the Skulks have a proven reputation as problem-solvers who can't be easily traced back to anyone. They further benefit from a close-held secret of melee combat that inflicts nauseating pain upon their foes, and Lomrick also admires their intelligence and mechanical aptitude, which appeals to his scientific curiosity. When the PCs arrive at the Weave Runner, most of the bar's patrons are in the process of hastily exiting the establishment to avoid a pending confrontation between Kaetrix and the Skulks. The Challenge Rating of this combat encounter includes an adjustment from CR 6 down to CR 5 due to Kaetrix's presumed assistance as an NPC ally. If necessary, you also use the barkeep or various patrons (use the statistics for a house servant on page 44), although such a character shouldn't play a significant role in the encounter.

Development: If the PCs defeat or drive off the Skaardorn gang, Kaetrix expresses her gratitude and admiration for their capabilities, even going so far as to mention them living up to any reputation she's heard about them since they arrived in Zel-Argose. In fact, she describes their exploits in enough detail that any PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Sense Motive check should ascertain she's well-connected in the city, even if her contacts came up short in warning her about the Skaardorn. If any of the Skulks survived the battle and the PCs interrogate them, the gang members attempt to bargain for their lives. If promised their freedom (or demoralized with a successful Intimidate check) they reveal that Relstanna is a kidnapped "elali," which Lomrick believes can fix an important gate to a previously unknown planet—a task on par with performing a minor miracle in their eyes, and not one they expect to succeed.

Eventually, Kaetrix fully introduces herself and explains her interest in Lomrick, as well as her working relationship with Relstanna. While she refrains from sharing their membership in the Bellianic Accord, she tells the PCs she believes Lomrick kidnapped her employer as part of a Hegemony plot. If the PCs haven't yet learned about the Hegemony, Kaetrix educates them on the group's shadow war with the Accord, further explaining that both have their roots in a much older interstellar conflict between the mythic entities—known only as the Patrons and Principalities—who created the gates between worlds.

While Kaetrix hasn't yet divined the full motive behind Relstanna's abduction (other than general espionage), she's very interested in any information the Skaardorn Skulks provide. She also managed to locate Lomrick's well-guarded estate in Zel-Argose. Aside from helping the PCs take their revenge on the jagladine, she's also prepared to offer them a reward of 2,000 credits if they can rescue Relstanna in the process. In fact, if the PCs share their current predicament and desire to return to their homeworld, she acknowledges that Relstanna can probably aid their cause better than anyone else on Argosa.

Unless the PCs insist upon (or need) her direct help, Kaetrix proposes they confront Lomrick without her, while she seeks out other contacts to occupy any klaven reinforcements in Zel-Argose which the Hegemony might send to aid the jagladine. Optionally, she can also join the party as an NPC ally, but this may require adjustments to the difficulty of the encounters in Part Three.

KAETRIX **CR 2**

XP 600

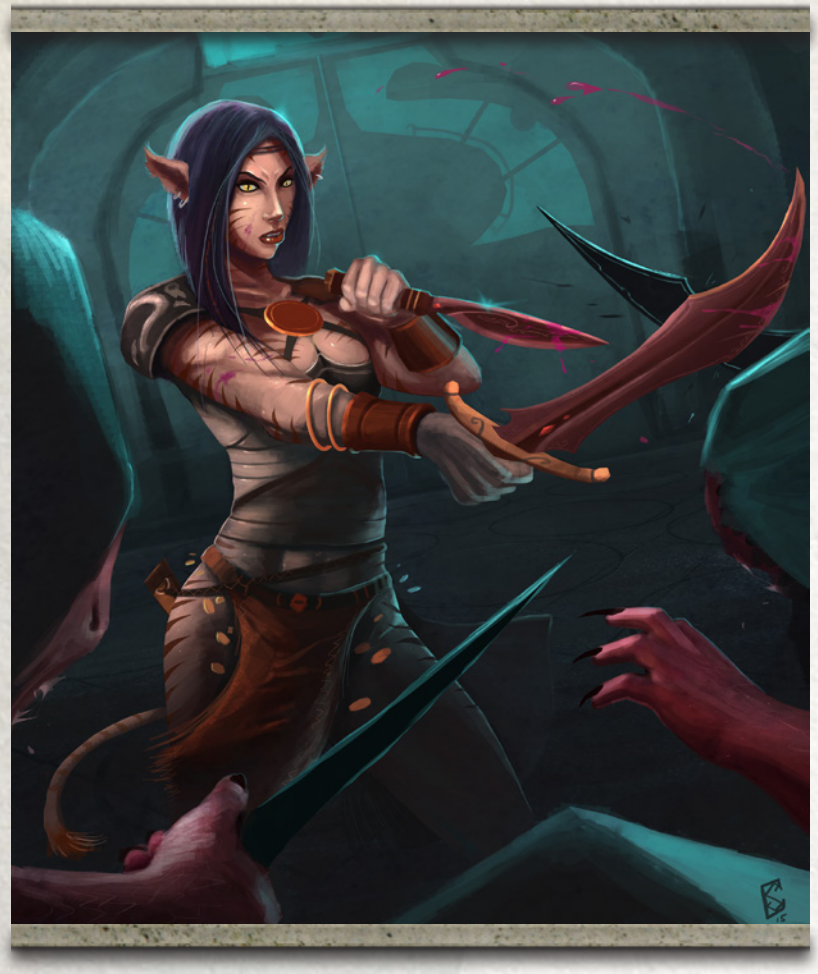
Female catfolk envoy

CG Medium humanoid (catfolk)

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +12

DEFENSE HP 23

EAC 13; **KAC** 14



Fort +1; **Ref** +6; **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical dueling sword +8 (1d6+2 S) orsurvival knife +8 (1d4+2 S)

Ranged azimuth laser pistol +6 (1d4 F; critical burn 1d4)

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +1; **Con** +0; **Int** +2; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +4

Skills Culture +8, Intimidate +12, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +7, Survival +7

Feats Multi-Weapon Fighting

Languages Catfolk, Common (Argosan)

Other Abilities cat's luck, envoy improvisations (dispiriting taunt, get 'em), sprinter

Gear kasatha microcord, azimuth laser pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), survival knife, tactical dueling sword, *mk 1 healing serum* (2), engineering specialty tool kit

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Cat's Luck (Ex) Once per day, when a catfolk attempts a Reflex saving throw, she can roll twice and use the better result. She must decide to use this ability before attempting the saving throw.

Sprinter (Ex) Catfolk gain a 10-foot racial bonus to their speed when using the charge, run, or withdraw actions.

SKAARDORN SKULKS (4) **CR 2**

XP 600 each

Ysoki operative

LE Medium humanoid (ysoki)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

DEFENSE HP 23 EACH

EAC 13; **KAC** 14

Fort +1; **Ref** +6; **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical baton +8 (1d4+2 B)

Ranged static arc pistol +6 (1d6 E; critical arc 2)

Offensive Abilities distracting strikes, operative exploits (uncanny mobility), trick attack +1d4

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +4; **Con** +0; **Int** +3; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +1

Skills Acrobatics +13, Engineering +13, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +13, Survival +8

Feats

Languages Common (Argosan), Ysoki

Other Abilities cheek pouches, moxie, specialization (ghost)

Gear freebooter armor 1, static arc pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), tactical baton, *mk 1 healing serum* (2), engineering tool kit, credstick (45 credits)

STATISTICS

Distracting Strikes (Ex) A creature that takes damage from a skaardorn skulk's melee attacks must succeed at a DC 13 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round.

D2. Stock Room

Stacks of crates and boxes line the walls of this rectangular room, along with several barrels and kegs. Two doors exit the room to the west and south.

This is the Weave Runner's stock room where the establishment stores its excess liquor, beer, and ale. The door to the west leads to a back entrance, but the barman keeps it locked (DC 30 Engineering check to open). The south door is usually unlocked during operating hours, watched over by the tavern staff.

D3. Lavatories

A short hallway leads to a pair of unlabeled lavatories. These areas are otherwise unremarkable.

PART 4: THE FALL OF LOMRICK

At this point in the adventure, the PCs should have finally discovered the location of Lomrick's residence in Zel-Argose—a city dwelling the jagladine purchased through intermediaries to use as an alternate base after the securing the uncharted gate to Garsilt in the temple ruins east of the city. The gate's subsequent malfunction, in addition to the discovery of the genetic markers in the species represented by the PCs, created a desperate situation for him. The Scions of the Celestial Helix need a wide sampling of their species' genes to assemble the right "key" to release the god-like Principalities from their dimensional prison. Zealously dedicated to this cause, Lomrick believes he can realize this apocalyptic prophecy in his lifetime, playing an integral role in bringing it to fruition.

To carry out this duty, Lomrick needs to repair the gate on Garsilt. And, for centuries now, the Ultari Hegemony has perpetuated a belief that certain members of the Bellianic Accord know how to restore Patron gates to full functionality. They especially believe this of any Accord agents secretly living on Argosa—which holds the distinction of being one of the few worlds to ever willingly sabotage and deactivate an interplanetary gate. As a result, Lomrick's agents sought out any knowledgeable scholars of Argosan history and Patron artifacts, eventually targeting the elali seer, Relstanna. He now holds her prisoner, subjecting her to relentless interrogations and mental assaults in an effort to force her to reveal the Accord's secrets about the gates. This is a more serious crime than simple kidnapping, as the Coteries cannot blithely ignore such an act if it comes to light. But Lomrick's need also matches that of the PCs, as Relstanna's knowledge represents the best hope of restoring the gate on Garsilt so they can return home.

If the PCs seem a bit lost or unclear of their motivations, feel free to have Kaetrix help them puzzle it out. The catfolk lacks an understanding of Lomrick's full agenda, but if the PCs came through a malfunctioning gate, she can guess the jagladine kidnapped Relstanna in an attempt to fix it, and the very same gate must have included a direct connection to their homeworld.

Lomrick's Manse

Lomrick bought his two-story estate in an upper-class district of Zel-Argose to use as an urban hideout, operating the compound in the same fashion as a coterie focused on storing stolen goods—in the form of Patron artifacts—until he can transport them off-world to his masters within the Ultari Hegemony. He also excavated additional rooms for a private laboratory and klaven spawning ground beneath it, abducting lone travelers or homeless vagabonds from the city streets to grow the Hegemony's presence on Argosa. The PCs can approach his property from the front or back (north or south, respectively, on the map), but his hired servants refuse to admit anyone. For additional security, the structure has few windows at ground level, but the second story includes two 15-foot-high balconies reachable with a successful DC 15 Athletics check to climb using the sculpted columns at the south entrance or the vegetation of the rear garden (at area **E8**). If the PCs choose to test these windows, Lomrick has reinforced them with iron bars (hardness 20, HP 30) which prevent all but a Tiny creature or smaller from squeezing through. Unless otherwise noted, the ceiling height inside the manse reaches 15 feet, including the newly-added underground chambers.

Note, Zel-Argose has no actively patrolling city-watch, other than agents of the Office of the Auditor who typically limit their regulation to business and trade. Consequently, most homes maintain their own private security, and the PCs should have already learned this after spending at least a few weeks in Zel-Argose. If not, Kaetrix can certainly advise them of such, particularly if they seek her assistance in planning an assault on Lomrick's estate.

E. Front Entrance (CR 2)

A well-worn path leads to this two-story, stone dwelling. Two, decorative columns flank a small stoop before a massive wooden door indicating the home's main entrance, and a 15-foot balcony looks down from above.

The estate's front door is kept locked at all times and requires a DC 25 Engineering check to open. A small panel allows those inside to respond to those seeking entrance without having to open the door.

Creatures: In the unlikely event the PCs approach the house and knock during daytime hours, two servants answer, appearing obviously nervous at the sight of an armed group. If the PCs request to speak to the master of the house, they politely explain he is not receiving guests without appointments. If the PCs press them with a successful DC 15 Intimidate check, the servants adopt pleading looks and ask if they can just leave, whimpering that they only work for the jagladine to feed their children, and claim they know little else about Lomrick's affairs. Truthfully, they do not. They do, however, know that monstrous klaven roam interior of the house, but Lomrick restricts their access to the rest of his home. The servants do not live in the house itself, but clean, sweep floors, and prepare meals during the day.

If the PCs approach during the evening, the balcony includes a klaven sentry which relies on its nanite exchange ability to warn others of its kind deeper within the compound. Unlike the hired servants, it has no reservations about defending Lomrick's home.

HOUSE SERVANTS (3) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Perception** +1

DEFENSE HP 12 EACH

EAC 10; **KAC** 11

Fort +2; **Ref** +0; **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee household object (broom, candlestick, etc.) +4 (1d4+2 B)

Ranged thrown household object (book, dish etc.) +2 (1d4 B)

Offensive Abilities improvised weaponry

TACTICS

During Combat Household servants are not trained for combat and fight only to defend themselves, typically taking the total defense action each round.

Morale A household servant's top priority in combat is to flee or surrender as soon as possible.

STATISTICS

Str +2; **Dex** +3; **Con** +0; **Int** +0; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +0

Skills Culture +9, Diplomacy +4, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4, Profession (household servant) +9

Languages Common

Gear household uniform, cleaning supplies, keys to some parts of the household

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Improvised Weaponry (Ex) As a household servant is rarely armed, such individuals are often adept at brandishing whatever objects happen to be handy in cases of bandits, monsters, or other unforeseen circumstances. They do not take the normal –4 penalty to attack rolls with such improvised objects and are treated as proficient with such objects, but they do not gain a Weapon Specialization bonus to their attack rolls.

KLAVEN SHOCKTROOPER **CR 2**

XP 600

hp 23 (see page 61)

E1. Foyer

The stone floors of this front foyer are swept clean and polished. Four columns support each corner to provide support for the ceiling and a sense of ornamentation. Two sets of double doors lead east and west, while an open archway to the north reveals a curving staircase to the second floor.

This room serves as a gathering area for visitors, but Lomrick receives very few of them. If the PCs generate an excessive amount of noise here (such as breaking down the main door), they may attract attention from the ysoki Skulks in area **E2** and the klaven from area **E11**.

E2. Parlor (CR 4)

A large, round table occupies the center of this room, low to the ground and with a hookah resting in its center. Floor pillows encircle it, while divans line the walls with small end tables to flank them. A window is set in the west wall with curtains pulled and crossbars in place to ensure no exterior access to the manse. The pungent, heady scent of smoke from an unknown plant lingers in the air. Double doors exit east.

The manse has few windows at ground level, but this room contains one of them. During the day, the breaks between the curtains let in enough illumination to produce dim light conditions. At night, a lit candle rests on the center table. A euphoric, tobacco-like substance fills the hookah, but it has no especially addictive properties. An unlocked drawer contains a large pouch of this mild drug, worth 50 credits on the open market.

Creatures: A pair of Skaardorn nightskulks lounge here. They belong to the same gang Lomrick hired to eliminate Kaetrix, but remained behind to supplement the klaven guarding his manse. If the rest of the Skaardorn never returned from the Weave Runner, they've grown more concerned about tying their fortunes to that of their jagladine employer, allowing his house servants to answer the front door, and only attacking if confronted by strangers or the sound of trouble.

Treasure: One of the Skulks carries a *mk 1 null-space chamber*, which the gang uses to stash stolen goods from

various robberies. Currently, it contains roughly 600 credits' worth of decorative art objects (5 bulk in all) they've pilfered from Lomrick's home.

Development: The Skulks flee or surrender if reduced to 5 Hit Points or less. If detained and demoralized with a successful DC 14 Intimidate check, they cooperate by offering any information they can, knowing that Lomrick keeps a secret laboratory somewhere on the house grounds, but he never shared its location with them. If pressed, they also know about the klaven sentry (at area **E11**).

SKAARDORN SKULKS (2) **CR 2**

XP 600 each

Ysoki operative (see page 42)

HP 23 each

E3. Study (CR 5)

A polished wood desk sits parallel to the north wall here, with a large chair behind it. A complicated brass orrery, no larger than a map globe, sits on one corner of the desk. Ornate rugs cover the floor and lend a more comfortable and luxurious ambiance. Paintings of strange, inhuman cities decorate the walls, their architecture suggestive of geometric insect hives. A few bookcases stand against the far walls, and a set of double doors exits west.

Lomrick uses this room as a study, though he keeps his more sensitive research in his laboratory downstairs. The paintings represent cities on worlds where the jagladine emerged as the dominant species, and the orrery represents Argosa's unique solar system (see the planetary gazetteer on page 68 for more information). The collective works among the bookshelves detail further information about Argosa's history, as well as the unique races which eventually migrated through its many interplanetary gates. The more valuable volumes represent an eclectic range of theories on nature, magic, and science.

Trap: Lomrick's desk includes a complex lock (requiring a successful DC 25 Engineering check to open), as well as a spring-loaded poison blade trap which activates when anyone attempts to open or pick the lock. It requires a successful DC 27 Perception check to locate and a DC 22 Engineering check to disarm.

Treasure: The brass orrery is 3 bulk and carries a scientific and artistic value of 300 credits. The three alien landscape paintings are each worth 100 credits to a collector. And, a successful DC 15 Culture check identifies four volumes of 1 bulk each among the bookshelves that would fetch 150 credits each in the specialty markets of Zel-Argose.

Lomrick's trapped desk drawer contains several pieces of private correspondence with the Scions of the Celestial Helix, including a series of reports from individuals who only identify themselves with a single letter followed by a number, for example "Q3". They detail the movements and activities of an individual named "Relstanna." Several notes also designate a "Supervisor Garabool" outlining expense vouchers for "local contractors pursuant to various operations." A cryptic scrawl adds, "An esteemed colleague has agreed to lend assistance in managing the elali seer so her mental tricks won't avail her. My colleague has no concept of finances, however, so we may owe an unspecified favor in the future. As ominous as that sounds, I know this creature—and I think the situation warrants it." For the GM's benefit, this refers to the cerebric fungus in area **E16**.

A red, leather-bound book also appears in Lomrick's desk, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Life Science check recognizes the hide is too thin and supple to come from a domesticated animal and the leather may have a humanoid origin. The book's contents are written in Ultari and it represents a religious treatise called *The Sanguine Key*. It takes 1d3 days to fully read and provides a general introduction to the Principalities and the faith of the Scions of the Celestial Helix. The final chapter tells a story of how the hated Patrons locked away the Principalities, but the Sanguine Key may one day affect their release. As a note to the GM, this is an early hint to the larger story of the Legendary Planet Adventure Path.

The desk drawer also contains a holoskin.

POISONED BLADE TRAP **CR 5**

XP 1,600

Type analog; **Perception** DC 27; **Disable** Engineering DC 22 (block the blade)

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** manual; **Bypass** hidden lock (Perception DC 27, Engineering DC 25)

Effect stiletto blade +20 (4d10+2 P plus jagladine neurotoxin; see page 63)

E4. Main Staircase

A set of polished hardwood stairs with handrails rises in the center of this chamber to a second floor above. Open archways lead north and south, while four doors exit east and west, two on each side.

Creatures on the first "L"-shaped section of the stairs are visible from the ground floor. This area otherwise contains no special features.

E5. Dining Room (CR 4)

A polished hardwood table runs down the center of this room, surrounded by comfortably padded chairs. Two large, barred windows reside in the western wall with the curtains drawn, and brass light fixtures decorate the corners of the room, as well as a small chandelier hanging above the table. Two doors exit east, while a third leads north.

This room has no unusual features, though the furnishings reflect quality craftsmanship. During the day, breaks between the curtains admit a dim light, but the room is completely dark if the PCs arrive at night.

Creature: Over the course of jagladine advancement into one of the Hegemony's elder races, they developed a cultural rapport with a great number of intelligent oozes, including a special breed of ooze known as a surveillance ooze. These creatures receive great respect in jagladine society, and often reside in their households to bolster defenses as guards or assassins in exchange for food and shelter. As such, Lomrick brought one with him to Argosa, smuggling it through customs by temporarily rendering it inert with a special chemical compound. Though unable to speak, the ooze has a perfect understanding of Aklo, a language which Lomrick uses to direct it. The ooze currently clings to the underside of the dining table, partially coiled around one leg where it has cover to hide unless a light source is lowered to the floor.

If it goes unnoticed, the surveillance ooze silently begins to follow any group of creatures it believes to have entered the residence without permission. It knows everyone Lomrick has previously allowed in the manse, including the jagladine's house servants and klaven sentries. The ooze's compression special ability permits it to glide underneath closed doors in the manse without squeezing or loss of movement, and thus it can follow the PCs until it finds an opportune moment to launch a surprise attack. The GM should be careful however, when combining encounters.

SURVEILLANCE OOZE **CR 4**

XP 1,200

N Small ooze

Init +3; **Senses** blindsight (vibration) 60 ft., sightless; **Perception** +0

DEFENSE HP 45

EAC 16; **KAC** 17

Fort +5; **Ref** +1 **Will** +5

Immunities ooze immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee slam +10 (1d4+9 plus paralysis [DC 15])

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +3; **Con** +1; **Int** —; **Wis** +0; **Cha** –1

Skills Stealth +22

Languages Aklo (can't speak any language)

Other Abilities compression, mindless, replay

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Compression (Ex) A surveillance ooze can move through an area as small as one-quarter its space without squeezing, or one-eighth its space when squeezing.

Mindless (Ex) A mindless creature has no Intelligence score and is immune to mind-affecting effects. Statistics such as ability DCs that rely on an Intelligence score treat its Intelligence modifier as +0.

Ooze Immunities (Ex) Oozes have immunity to the following effects, unless the effect specifies that it works against oozes: critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, polymorph effects, poison, sight-based effects, sleep, and the stunned condition. An ooze can't be flanked.

Replay (Su) A surveillance ooze has been created to capture and relay events to a master. A creature who remains in contact with a surveillance ooze for 1 minute (such as by laying a hand on the ooze) gains a series of mental impressions effectively replaying the last hour experienced by the ooze (though this information is limited to nonvisual senses only, as the ooze is sightless and cannot record things it cannot perceive). The creature experiencing this replay effect is subject to the ooze's paralysis effect, though a successful saving throw grants it immunity to this effect for the duration of the replay.

Sightless (Ex) This creature has no visual senses and is thus immune to effects that require the target to see (such as gaze attacks or visual-only illusions).

E6. Guest Rooms

This small chamber contains a made bed with an adjacent night stand. A small writing desk sits in the southwest corner next to a small, wooden chest.

Each of these rooms were part of the manse's original construction and intended for quartering guests or houseservants. Lomrick has no need for such full-time services from his hired staff, and he transforms visitors who overstay their welcome into more klaven footsoldiers. As a result, these rooms currently remain unused.

E7. Kitchen

This room bears all the implements of a well-run kitchen, and includes an interior stone well in its northwest corner opposite a woodstove. A stained butcher's block rests in the center of the room, and multiple shelves and a spice rack hang along the northeast wall. The strange scent of something sour mixed with brine lingers in the air.

This room presents a tidy composition, but the lingering smell has a decidedly unwholesome quality to it. This is partially due to the exotic spices and marinades Lomrick prefers in his meal preparation. An examination of the spice rack reveals substances wholly unpalatable to most other humanoids.

E8. Rear Garden (CR 5)

The rear of the manse encloses an open air garden backed by a tall, stone wall set with a wrought iron gate. The garden itself includes well-tended walking paths between the gate and an open archway leading inside. A solitary, stone door enters the side of the building to the east, and a second-floor patio overlooks the garden from the south side.

The rear wall is 15 feet tall, which requires a successful DC 15 Athletics check to scale, and the hinged gate includes an iron lock (DC 25 Engineering to unlock). Otherwise treat the gate as an iron portcullis (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28). The door to the east leads to the underground laboratory complex Lomrick added to the manse, and he keeps this entrance secure with a *security seal* (hardness 15, HP 60, break DC 33).

Creatures: This area appears to be a security weak point, but Lomrick keeps two additional "pets" on permanent guard duty here. Two bloody jasmines—delicate vining plants with fragrant white flowers—situate themselves in the soil flanking the gate and, like many jagladine-inspired horrors, Lomrick keeps them for future study and potential weaponization. He has trained the plants not to enter the house or leave the garden, and the houseservants never enter this area without a klaven escort. The plants do not attack Lomrick, as they have instinctively learned he keeps them fed, and the jagladine carries a special repellant that renders him immune to their entrancing fragrance.

Development: The bloody jasmines act as superb guardians by day or night, but they also challenge stealthy PCs to remain quiet. If alerted to any intrusion, two klaven posted at area **E11** may respond by emerging on the north balcony, granting them a clear field of fire with their spur rifles into the garden.

BLOODY JASMINES (2) **CR 3**

XP 800 each

N Small plant

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +1

Aura entrancing fragrance (15 ft., DC 12)

DEFENSE HP 40 EACH

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +2

Immunities plant immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

Melee vine +11 (1d6+5 plus 1d4 bleed)

Ranged thorn +8 (1d6+3 P)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with vine)

TACTICS

During Combat A bloody jasmine remains motionless, posing as a mundane plant, until a creature comes into range of its entrancing fragrance and is fascinated. It prefers melee attacks so it can draw nourishment from its foes' blood.

Morale Bloody jasmines have no sense of self-preservation and fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str +2; **Dex** +1; **Con** +4; **Int** —; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +2

Skills Disguise +13 (+23 to appear as a normal plant)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Entrancing Fragrance (Ex) The delicate scent of a bloody jasmine is compelling to most humanoids. A creature within 15 feet of the plant must succeed at a DC 12 Fortitude save or gain the fascinated condition. An affected creature can attempt a new saving throw each round to resist the effect. Creatures with the scent ability take a –4 penalty to the saving throw. This is a poison effect.

E9. Larder

Rows of shelves line this small, stone-floored room. Each one bears a number of crates, bottles, and other stored foodstuffs. Doors exit west and north.

This larder contains nothing particularly valuable other than a half-dozen pricey bottles of wine worth 25 credits each. None of the food has spoiled yet, but if the PCs spend more than a round searching the storeroom, they find some of it to be wholly unpalatable to human tastes. For example, they find containers of dried insects, pickled animal brains (a few of which look suspiciously humanoid), and a box of fertilized topsoil hosting a collection of fat, juicy worms all have their place among the food supplies. Other, more standard fare such as fruits and vegetables also exist. The door to the north remains unlocked.

E10. Garden Storage

Garden tools, such as rakes, hoes, and watering pails line the north and west walls of this chamber. Burlap sacks of seed and flower bulbs rest on the stone floor. A single door exits south.

This seemingly innocuous room is actual the entrance to Lomrick's underground laboratory which he added to the manse shortly after purchasing it. A successful DC 25 Perception check locates a secret door in the northeast corner, leading to a 15-foot stairway descending south.

E11. Upper Landing (CR 4)

The landing of this upper floor surrounds an open staircase descends to the lower level. A door exits south, while an open archway leads north to a small balcony providing a clear view of a walled garden below.

The stairs are open such that creatures are visible from this landing on the top-most "L"-shaped section of the staircase. The door to the south has a lock (DC 25 Engineering check to open), but remains open while any klaven have stationed themselves here.

Creatures: Two klaven shocktroopers serve as sentries here to protect the manse from intruders. This location also keeps them out of sight of visitors and passersby at street level. They have Lomrick's permission to enter area **E12** and, from there, they can stand on the balcony to observe creatures at the front of the house and fire their spur rifles, if necessary. The same is true if they hear sound through the archway to the north from the garden. If they become aware of intruders downstairs they don't hesitate to respond.

KLAVEN SHOCKTROOPERS (2) **CR 2**

XP 600 each

Klaven soldier (see page 61)

HP 25 each

Gear keys to areas **E9** and **E12**

E12. Master Bedroom

This room contains a large bed positioned along the east wall, flanked by a pair of nightstands. A full-length mirror in a wood frame stands in the northwest corner across from it, and thick rugs cover the hardwood floor. Three doors exit north, south, and southwest.

Lomrick reserves this bedroom for himself, but spends far more time in his underground laboratory since his return from Garsilt. Although furnished for a human, the room contains nothing of value. The southwest door opens into a small closet where Lomrick keeps a few clothes, mostly four-armed jagladine apparel for practical purposes meant to blend into other cultures on different planets or designate rank within the Hegemony. The southern door leads to the front balcony. It includes a lock (DC 25 Engineering check to open), but the klaven guards (in area **E11**) leave it unsecured at night so they can access the balcony more quickly.

E13. Secure Hallway (CR 4)

This wide corridor has a rough, unfinished feel to its walls and floors compared to the building above. A damp, earthy smell permeates the air, and the hallway extends east to west before finally turning south.

Note, this corridor and subsequent areas are unlit, as all the current occupants have darkvision.

Creatures: Two klaven shocktroopers remain stationed here to protect the underground laboratory from intruders. They attack without hesitation, but if hard-pressed, they withdraw towards area **E18** so their nanite exchange ability can reach the rest of the klaven and warn Lomrick.

KLAVEN SHOCKTROOPERS (2) **CR 2**

XP 600 each

Klaven soldier (see page 61)

HP 25 each

E14. Morgue (CR 5)

Three gurneys extend from the west wall of this long, rectangular room. Each bears a humanoid body covered with a bloodstained sheet. A metal table stands askew from the southernmost gurney, and another bears a neat row of surgical implements near the far wall. The sweet, sickly smell of blood is almost overpowering here, and a single door provides the only exit to the north.

The door to this makeshift morgue remains unlocked, as Lomrick prefers unimpeded access when delivering the bodies of failed test subjects here. The first two gurneys have actual human cadavers under their bloody sheets, and casual examination suggests a precise surgical dissection with the removal of small bones and vital organs. The surgical tools and equipment all appear very well cleaned.

Creature: The southern gurney bears a horrific creation beneath its sheet, a constructed monstrosity formed of stitched-together parts from myriad corpses and given life through an eldritch experiment. Upon hearing the PCs, it sits upright, bending at the waist with a smooth, unnatural motion before sliding off the gurney to lumber towards them and attack. Although Lomrick can command the creature, he has little interest in it, as he considers the creature a failure. Its default instructions are to attack anyone other than Lomrick or a klaven which enters the morgue.

Treasure: A successful DC 20 Perception check while examining the other corpses reveals one of them still wears an intact estex suit II.

CHIMERIC CORPSE **CR 5**

XP 1,600

N Large construct (magical)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +0

DEFENSE HP 70

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +5; **Ref** +5; **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities fast healing 5; **Immunities** construct immunities; **Resistances** cold 5, electricity 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +14 (1d6+10 B; critical staggered [DC 13])

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Offensive Abilities rend (2 slams, 1d6+10 B)

TACTICS

During Combat The chimeric corpse attacks the nearest creature, making full attacks whenever possible and striving to tear its opponents to pieces.

Morale A chimeric corpse fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +3; **Con** —; **Int** —; **Wis** +0; **Cha** –2

Other Abilities mindless, unliving

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Rend (Ex) If a chimeric corpse deals damage with two slam attacks to a single target in the same round, it grasps and tears at the target, dealing an additional 1d6+10 bludgeoning damage.

E15. Klaven Conversion Tanks

An unpleasant, coppery tang of harsh chemicals wafts from this room as the door is opened. Two, large wooden vats sit on the floor, each filled with an unwholesome green fluid pumped into them from an adjacent, box-like apparatus. A single door leads south.

The devices in this room should present a familiar sight to the PCs by now, as they've likely encountered similar klaven conversion tanks on Garsilt and the temple ruins when they first arrived on Argosa. Lomrick has no current specimens undergoing transformation, but the equipment clearly indicates he has the means, if necessary, and already bear signs of recent use. The PCs can destroy this equipment with a few minutes of effort, but such an action creates considerable noise and releases an even greater chemical reaction polluting the air.

E16. Relstanna's Prison (CR 6)

This immense, hexagon-shaped room has four short extensions branching out from the main chamber at each of the four, cardinal compass points. Another smaller chamber, seemingly made of glass, sits in the center, its walls extending from a gleaming metal and connecting to a similar enclosure attached to the stone ceiling 15 feet above. The structure includes the vague outline of a glass door on its eastern face, and a standard door exits the greater room to the east.

The locked door to this room's glass enclosure has been sealed with a *security seal*, causing it to require a DC 35 Engineering check to breach. Its magically-treated walls prove far tougher than actual glass (hardness 10, HP 15, break DC 24), and radiate a moderate abjuration aura effectively blocking both sound and telepathic communication.

Creatures: The glass enclosure currently holds the elali seer Relstanna as Lomrick's prisoner. Once the PCs enter the room, she attempts to stand, staggering slightly from hunger and dehydration. At first, she regards them with curiosity, as she's only interacted with Lomrick, his klaven, and her current jailor—a contemplative named Aardregghr—in the underground laboratory. Upon realizing they have no association with her jagladine captor, she pounds on the glass wall with her fists and gestures to warn them of Aardregghr's presence. Her distress only serves to attract the attention of the contemplative, however, and it hovers forth from the uppermost alcove north of her enclosure. Relstanna's Hit Points are reduced in this encounter due to the interrogation techniques used upon her by Lomrick. Likewise, she cannot use her spell-like abilities until she's had 8 hours of rest to recover.

Aardregghr represents the mysterious "colleague" Lomrick identified in his correspondence with the Scions of the Celestial Helix (found in his desk at area **E3**). The contemplative has the mental fortitude to withstand most of Relstanna's powers, and it relishes the repeated intrusions upon her mind. Once it becomes aware of the PCs, Aardregghr casts *invisibility* to quietly observe them and their interaction with Relstanna. If they attempt to free the elali, however, Aardregghr attacks, using the 5-foot-wide alcove to protect itself from being surrounded while attacking anyone approaching it with its spells and zero pistol.

Development: If the PCs defeat Aardregghr, but fail to break the glass enclosure or disable its door, Relstanna slowly traces the letters for the word "key", and then she points south towards Lomrick's lab. If the PCs do manage to liberate her, she's far too weak to help them fight the jagladine. She does, however, pledge to aid them in return for rescuing her.

RELSTANNA **CR 4**

XP 1,200

Female elali (see page 57)

HP 45 (currently 10)

AARDREGGHR **CR 6**

XP 2,400

Contemplative technomancer

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** blindsense (thought) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +15

DEFENSE HP 75 RP 4

EAC 17; **KAC** 18

Fort +5; **Ref** +7; **Will** +11 (+4 vs. mind-affecting effects); +2 vs. spells and magical effects

Weaknesses atrophied

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., fly 30 ft. (Su; perfect)

Melee claw +11 (1d6+5 S)

Ranged frostbite-class zero pistol +13 (1d6+6 C; critical staggered [DC 13])

Offensive Abilities applied knowledge

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)

1/day—*detect thoughts* (DC 16)

Technomancer Spells Known (CL 6th; ranged +13)

2nd (3/day)—*caustic conversion*, *invisibility*

1st (6/day)—*grease* (DC 17), *identify*, *magic missile*

0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 16), *energy ray*

TACTICS

Before Combat Aardregghr casts *invisibility* to hide as it observes any intruders.

During Combat The contemplative prefers to fight from one of the room's alcoves, but retreats to the 15-foot-high ceiling to stay out of reach of his foes while raining down attacks from above.

Morale Aardregghr fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str –2; **Dex** +3; **Con** –1; **Int** +5; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +1

Skills Bluff +13, Culture +13, Mysticism +18, Stealth +13

Languages Aklo; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities cache capacitor (*keen senses*), magic hacks (magic negation, spell countermeasures), spell cache

Gear frostbite-class zero pistol with 1 battery (20 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Applied Knowledge (Ex) Once per day before attempting a skill check or saving throw against a creature, a contemplative can use its bonus for the skill associated with that creature's type (such as Life Science for an ooze or Mysticism for an outsider) in place of its normal bonus.

Atrophied (Ex) A contemplative's limbs are practically vestigial. A contemplative can manipulate most tools and one-handed weapons (including small arms) without difficulty. A contemplative can't properly wield a two-handed weapon without dedicating its telekinetic powers to supporting the weapon, and even then it takes a –4 penalty to attack rolls. It also can't use its spell-like abilities or fly until it is no longer wielding that weapon.

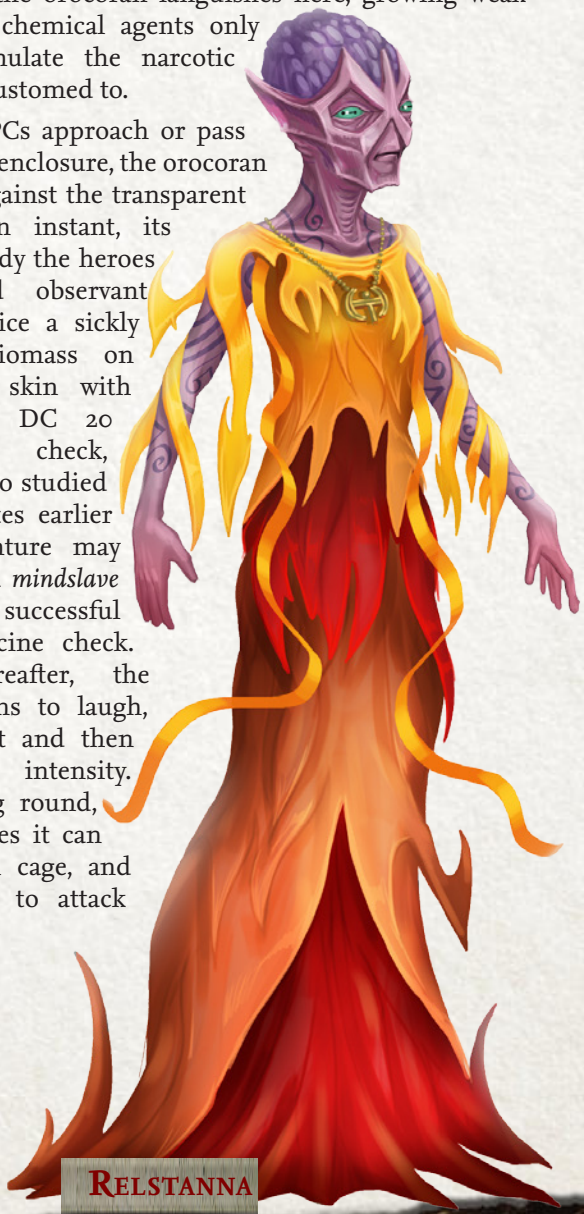
E17. Urban Assault Deployment Chamber (CR 5)

This octagonal chamber contains a smaller, square glass enclosure centered on the floor. A dense, roiling mist fills this box-like structure and an occasional thud sounds from within. The outline of a glass door appears on its north facing, and the walls of the glass enclosure run from a gleaming metallic floor to the stone ceiling 15 feet above. Two sets of double doors exit the exterior room to the north and west. A 5-foot-wide hole appears in the floor to the southeast.

Neither set of exterior doors are locked in this room, but the box-like glass enclosure has similar characteristics as the one located in area **E16** (hardness 10, HP 15, break DC 24), except it has no magical enhancement to block sound or telepathy, and it lacks a *security seal*. The northeast hole in the greater chamber's floor descends 5 feet before entering a narrow tunnel which eventually leads to an underground cistern feeding into the city's sewer system. It's far too narrow to use as an escape tunnel, even for Small humanoids.

Creature: This enclosure contains one of the worst of Lomrick's nightmarish experiments—a bizarre alien known as an orocoran lurking within the roiling mist. The beast attacked Zel-Argose's water treatment plant some years ago, and Lomrick curried favor with the Coterie's joint council, the Peerage, by offering to destroy it for them with a jagladine chemical compound. In reality, he captured the creature and placed a *mindslave harness* on it in an effort to control its actions, though he has not yet been successful in communicating with its alien psyche. While he continues his experiments, the orocoran languishes here, growing weak as Lomrick's chemical agents only somewhat emulate the narcotic fluids it is accustomed to.

When the PCs approach or pass near the glass enclosure, the orocoran flings itself against the transparent walls. For an instant, its many eyes study the heroes intently, and observant PCs may notice a sickly green-gray biomass on its wrinkled skin with a successful DC 20 Perception check, which PCs who studied Lomrick's notes earlier in the adventure may recognize as a *mindslave harness* with a successful DC 20 Medicine check. Shortly thereafter, the creature begins to laugh, slowly at first and then with greater intensity. The following round, it demonstrates it can open its own cage, and skitters forth to attack intruders.



Relstanna

Development: Unlike Lomrick's klaven guards, the orocoran still knows fear, and if reduced to 10 Hit Points or less, it attempts to flee unless Lomrick is on hand to countermand it. If it escapes and the PCs slay Lomrick, the orocoran continues to roam Zel-Argose, likely creating further problems for the city.

WEAKENED OROCORAN **CR 5**

XP 1,600

CE Medium aberration

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *see invisibility*; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE HP 70

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +6; **Ref** +7; **Will** +4 (+8 vs. mind-affecting effects)

Defensive Abilities all-around vision

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee proboscis +11 (1d6+5 P plus 1d6 bleed)

Ranged projectile vomit +14 (1d4+5 A plus hallucinate)

Offensive Abilities

Orocoran Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

Constant—*see invisibility*

TACTICS

During Combat The orocoran prefers to keep its distance and use its projectile vomit ability to debilitate its foes.

Morale The orocorans fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +5; **Con** +3; **Int** –1; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +2

Skills Mysticism +11, Stealth +16, Survival +11

Languages Aklo (can't speak any language); limited telepathy 60 ft.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hallucinate (Ex) An orocoran's stomach fluids are laced with narcotic black ichors. A creature hit with the orocoran's projectile vomit must succeed at a DC 13 Will save or be confused (as per *confusion*) for 1d4 rounds.

Projectile Vomit (Ex) As a standard action, an orocoran can spew a thin stream of vomit at a target within 30 feet. In addition to taking damage, a creature hit with this spray is subject to the orocoran's hallucinate ability.

E18. Test and Training Room (CR 7)

A strong chemical smell pervades this long chamber, but lacks a singularly distinct odor, as if formed by a mélange of substances blended over time. The stone floor bears numerous stains, streaks, and slight pitting by corrosive elements, and weapon racks hang along the opposing walls. The entire chamber funnels itself like a cone towards the south, eventually ending before a solitary door. Another set of double doors exits north.

Lomrick practices his clinical trials with various alchemical mixtures in this chamber, many of them designed for military applications. The cone-shaped room affords him the opportunity to throw grenades safely and study their results. His klaven guards also use it to train and practice coordinated tactics. Both sets of doors are unlocked when the PCs enter this area, and the southern door to area **E19** is already slightly ajar.

Creatures: Unless alerted beforehand, six klaven are actively training in this room when the PCs enter, but they immediately break off their mock combat and turn their heads in silent unison as they become aware of their presence. Lomrick is actually in area **E19**, but becomes

aware something has happened the moment he hears the footsoldiers stop fighting and comes to investigate 1 round later. If warned in advance by a klaven nanite exchange, Lomrick joins the soldier-slaves to prepare an ambush for anyone venturing here. The four klaven footsoldiers occupy the squares designated with an "A", while the stronger shocktroopers stand in the squares marked "B."

Lomrick should immediately recognize the PCs from the time he spent examining them on Garsilt. In typically villainous fashion, he converses with them in the middle of combat, stating, "I should have known your kind would manifest exceptional tenacity for a lower lifeform. Your evolved physiology bears a greater genetic code, and what a delightful service you've performed for me by coming here and bringing it to me once again! My superiors will only require a modest sampling of your blood and bone marrow! And then, once we've repaired the gate to your homeworld, you'll visit it again…as klaven servants to the Hegemony!" The jagladine attacks immediately thereafter, relying on his footsoldiers to act as a buffer between him and the PCs.

Development: The klaven fight to the death under any circumstance, and Lomrick ruthlessly uses them ruthlessly to ensure his own survival, if necessary. The jagladine refuses surrender but may try to flee if the battle turns against him. If defeated, he carries a key which opens Relstanna's glass enclosure at area **E16**. Should he escape, though, Lomrick becomes an especially tenacious enemy, likely resurfacing multiple times during the Legendary Planet Adventure Path to vex the PCs with yet another attempt to capture them for research and experimentation. At the GM's discretion, he may return at a higher CR to maintain present a continuing threat to the PCs.

KLAVEN FOOTSOLDIERS (4) — CR 1/2

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (see page 61)

KLAVEN SHOCKTROOPERS (2) — CR 2

XP 600 each

Klaven soldier (see page 61)

HP 25 each

LOMRICK — CR 4

XP 1,200

NE Medium monstrous humanoid (jagladine)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; low-light vision; **Perception** +10

DEFENSE — HP 54

EAC 16; **KAC** 17

Fort +3; **Ref** +5; **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities fast healing 2; **Immunities** disease and poison; **Resistances** cold 5, fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee survival knife +9 (1d4+4 S)

Ranged corona laser pistol +11 (2d4+4 F; critical burn 1d4) or flash grenade I +11 (explode [5 ft., blinded 1d4 rounds, DC 15]) or frag grenade II +11 (explode [15 ft., 2d6 P, DC 15]) or incendiary grenade I +11 (explode [5 ft., 1d6 F plus 1d4 burn, DC 15]) or screamer grenade II +11 (explode [15 ft., 1d10 So plus deafened 1d4 minutes, DC 15]) or shock grenade II +11 (explode [15 ft., 2d6 E, DC 15]) or smoke grenade +11 (explode [20 ft., smoke cloud 1 minute, DC 15]) or stickybomb grenade II +11 (explode [15 ft., entangled 2d4 rounds, DC 15])

TACTICS

Before Combat The encounter assumes Lomrick has no forewarning, but if this changes, he drinks a dose of deathblade poison to use with his reflexive biology ability.

During Combat Lomrick relies upon his hand-crafted grenades in combat, alternating between effects that hinder his opponents and those that directly harm. He uses his innate climb speed to crawl up the chamber walls and across the ceiling to stay out of melee. If forced into melee, he uses his reflexive biology ability to poison his survival knife. He resorts to attacking with his laser pistol only as a last resort.

Morale If reduced to 15 HP or less and the PCs still appear hardy, Lomrick retreats, throwing a smoke grenade to give himself cover and using a *spell amp of invisibility* to better hide.

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +3; **Con** +1; **Int** +5; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Bluff +10, Culture +10, Life Science +15, Medicine +15, Mysticism +15, Stealth +10

Languages Aklo, Common, Jagladine, Queborrin, Ultari

Other Abilities multi-armed, reflexive biology

Gear basic lashunta tempweave (mk 1 thermal capacitor), survival knife, corona laser pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), flash grenade I, frag grenades II (2), incendiary grenades I (2), screamer grenades II (2), shock grenades II (2), smoke grenade, stickybomb grenades II (2), *spell amp of invisibility*, *mk 2 healing serums* (2), deathblade poison (2 doses), rejuvenation vine (see page 66), keys (to areas **E3**, **E9**, **E12**, and **E16**)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Multi-Armed (Ex) A jagladine has four arms, which allows them to wield and hold up to four hands' worth of weapons and equipment. While their multiple arms increase the number of items they can have at the ready, it doesn't increase the number of attacks they can make during combat.

Reflexive Biology (Ex) As a full-round action, a jagladine can absorb a single disease or poison effect without suffering any ill conditions. As a swift action while it has such an effect absorbed, it can attempt a Fortitude save against the DC of the absorbed disease or poison to excrete a liquified version of the disease or poison. If successful, this excretion remains potent for the next 24 hours. The liquified version of the disease or poison must be applied via ingestion or injury. A jagladine can only store one disease or poison at a time; further disease and poison effects are ignored per their racial immunity.

E19. Lomrick's Workshop

This small chamber contains a heavily-stained table against the east wall, covered with beakers, burners, and numerous vials and containers of chemicals and strange, alien substances. A smaller, wooden desk and chair near the south wall, and a single door exits north.

Treasure: Additionally, placed in a corner are several items he has no use for but has confiscated from some of his past victims and enemies, including a suit of vesk overplate I, a tactical knife, and a thunderstrike screamer with a high-capacity battery. The desk contains a credstick with 1,500 credits.

Conclusion

Once the PCs rescue Relstanna, they find the elali extremely grateful and more than willing to repay them by aiding their cause to return home. She identifies herself as an active adversary of the oppressive Ultari Hegemony and Lomrick's kind. She also explains the jagladine belongs to a dangerous group of religious zealots known as the Scions of the Celestial Helix with the active goal of returning an ancient evil to the multiverse. She then asks the PCs to tell her their entire story, from when they were first abducted as well as any events they may have experienced, though their memories may be muddled by the torments suffered during their captivity. Relstanna has no direct comment on Lomrick's exact interest in their genetic makeup, but nor does she refute or reject any information they provide her about his notes on the matter. Instead, she indicates she'll have to confer with her off-world peers to unravel their mystery.

Sadly, Relstanna also explains she has no personal means to repair or alter an interplanetary gate. Lomrick drastically overestimated her capabilities in that regard, and even the Bellianic Accord has no direct knowledge of how to restore or build such technology. She offers her condolences that the PCs now find themselves marooned on a strange new world, but offers them a glimmer of hope with the acknowledgement that such information likely exists among the Patron ruins scattered across other worlds. She offers to research these legends and share such information in return for her rescue, and this development segues into the next chapter of the Legendary Planet Adventure Path with next adventure, *The Scavenged Codex*.

Beyond the Adventure

Every installment of the **Legendary Planet** saga is a grand adventure, but what you will find between these pages is far more than just an adventure. Each issue also brings you a selection of articles expanding the incredible universe in ways that go far beyond the adventure itself.

- A half-dozen marvelous monsters: the **bahgra** dog-men, contemplative **elali**, sinister scientist **jagladine,** battle-hardened **klaven** and **klavenwarbeasts**, and the terrifying insectile **tauslek**.

- 5 new magic items and 4 new weapons, from the *assassin's band* to the trinity blade!

- A detailed gazetteer of the interplanetary crossroads world **Argosa** and the corrupt coteries of the city of **Zel-Argose**

- A detailed breakdown of the 20 primary pantheistic patron deities of the **Legendary Planet** setting, from clever **Alrenjae** to **Yajaan the World-Dreamer**

- "The Treasure Within," the first chapter in Chris A. Jackson's ongoing tale of Anasya, an interplanetary adventurer whose world is about to change with the arrival of strangers from beyond.

BESTIARY

Bahgra

Standing roughly five feet tall, this creature resembles an upright canine with a pronounced snout, lolling tongue, and a mouth open clear to the jawbone.

BAHGRA **CR 1/2 COMBATANT**

XP 200

N Medium humanoid (bahgra)

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +0

DEFENSE HP 13

EAC 10; **KAC** 12

Fort +3; **Ref** +3; **Will** +0

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee scimitar +6 (1d6+3 S) or bite +6 (1d6+3 P)

Ranged hunting rifle +3 (1d8 P) or frag grenade I +3 (explode [15 ft., 1d6 P, DC 11])

STATISTICS

Str +3; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidate +4, Survival +4

Languages Bahgra, Common (can't speak), Ultari (can't speak)

Other Abilities pack attack

Gear leather armor (as second skin), frag grenade I, hunting rifle with 20 longarm rounds, scimitar (as tactical dueling sword)

ECOLOGY

Environment cold or temperate forest, hills, or plains

Organization solitary, pair, or pack (3–12)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pack Attack (Ex) When flanking a target with another bahgra from the same pack, a bahgra gains a +4 bonus to attack rolls instead of the normal +2 bonus from flanking.

The bahgra are often referred to as "dog folk" due to their distinctly canine features. Although they stand upright with fully articulate hands, their heads still portray the bestial snout and teeth of wild dogs. They also communicate through barks, growls, and soulful whines, but struggle to make themselves understood in the languages of other races, lacking the ability to make certain sounds and facial expressions. Generally taller than dwarves, but shorter than humans, bahgra flourish in both temperate and cold environments thanks to their natural fur—the coloration of which can vary as widely as the ethnicities of other humanoid races.

Bahgra possess a cunning intelligence, but most regard them as little more than apex predators and savages. Discovered by the krang while serving the Ultari Hegemony, the bahgra never escaped the barbaric in-fighting of their planet, clashing repeatedly with off-world visitors and one another. When the krang finally established a peaceful truce with the dog folk and discovered they could learn more advanced concepts through sign language, they found themselves confronted with a significant choice—allow the Hegemony to enslave the bahgra, or quietly "uplift" them so they could rise to the laborer or soldier caste. Choosing the latter, the krang ultimately lacked the time and access to significantly shape bahgra society, and ultimately abandoned them when they defected the Hegemony to join with the Bellanic Accord. Though they convinced some of the dog folk to accompany them, the bahgra species had already spread to other worlds and many remained culturally contaminated by the Hegemony. In time, however, some followed the example of the krang, striking off on their own to reestablish their independence and cultural identity.

Bahgra make excellent trackers, skilled laborers, and warriors, possessing a natural "team" instinct which makes them well-suited to construction and manufacturing. This trait also manifests during combat, as bahgra excel in pack-based tactics.

Bahgra Characters

Due to their history as an uplifted species, bahgra have spread to many different worlds, making them one of the more common and plentiful species in the galactic melting pot. All bahgra have the following racial traits.

Ability Adjustments: +2 Str, +2 Cha, –2 Int. Bahgra are strong and sturdy creatures, with a strong sense of self and pack. Decidedly younger than their interplanetary peers, they've lagged considerably in advancing any kind of species-wide intellectual pursuits.

Hit Points: 4

Size and Type: Bahgra are Medium humanoids with the bahgra subtype

Natural Attack: The bahgra never evolved out of a distinctly canine mouth and jawline. They have a fierce natural bite attack which deals 1d6 damage. This attack deals lethal damage and doesn't count as archaic. They gain a unique weapon specialization with this bite attack at 3rd level, allowing them to add 1–1/2 × their character level to their damage rolls for this bite attack (instead of just adding their character level, as usual).

Pack Instincts: Bahgra receive one bonus feat from the following list at first level: Bodyguard, Coordinated Shot, Diversion, In Harm's Way, Spry Cover, Suppressive Fire. The bahgra must meet the prerequisites of the selected feat. Members of a pack typically possess the same feat.

Low-Light Vision: Bahgra have low-light vision.

Languages: Bahgra can speak their own language and understand others, but are physically unable to master the speech of most humanoid races. The reverse is not true however, as most humanoids can master a limited form of the Bahgra tongue. A bahgra with a high Intelligence score can choose to learn the following additional languages: Common (for their local planet), Gnoll, Jaskirri, Krang, Orc, Sign Language, Ultari.

Elali

Strange tattoos belie this humanoid's alien nature where the midpoint of its head splits like a flower with lavender skin overlapping its exposed brain.

ELALI **CR 4 EXPERT**

XP 1,200

NG Medium humanoid (elali)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +10

DEFENSE **HP 45**

EAC 16; **KAC** 17

Fort +3; **Ref** +3; **Will** +9

Immunities paralysis; **Resistances** electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 15

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee survival knife +8 (1d4 S)

Ranged static arc pistol +10 (1d6 E; critical arc 2)

Offensive Abilities mental paralysis

Elali Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)

1/day—*modify memory* (DC 18), *invisibility*

3/day—*disguise self* (humanoid only), *suggestion* (DC 16), *supercharge weapon*

At will—*flight* (2nd-level, self only)

STATISTICS

Str –1; **Dex** +1; **Con** +0; **Int** +5; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +1

Skills Diplomacy +10, Medicine +10, Mysticism +15, Perception +10, Sense Motive +15

Languages Celestial, Common, Elali, Ultari; telepathy 100 ft.

Gear basic tempweave (as basic lashunta tempweave), static arc pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), survival knife

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary, pair, or cluster (3–12)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Mental Paralysis (Su) Elali can assail the minds of lesser creatures with waves of psychic energy to temporarily restrict conscious control of their bodies. As a standard action, an elali can use this ability to target a single creature within 30 feet as a mind-affecting effect. As long as the creature has an Intelligence score but a modifier less than that of the elali itself, it must succeed at a DC 15 Will saving throw or gain the paralyzed condition for 1d4+1 rounds similar to a *hold person* spell. Each round, on its turn, an affected creature can attempt a new saving throw to end the effect as a full-round action which does not provoke attacks of opportunity. Once targeted by this ability (whether successful or not), a creature is immune to further mental paralysis from that elali for the next 24 hours. An elali may only maintain one instance of mental paralysis at a time.

A powerful psychic species—and the elder statesmen of the Bellanic Accord—elali have long cultivated a reputation as benevolent shepherds of the multiverse. Ages ago, they evolved on a lush, mountainous world with vicious predators, forced to rely on cunning and intellect to survive. As a result, they also prefer to remain in the shadows of interplanetary affairs, often shaping events on other worlds through proxies and intermediaries until native species are ready to accept their presence. The true agenda of the elali is sustain the master plans and prophecies of the ascended Patrons, moving the multiverse towards a similar enlightenment and joint commonality.

Capable of channeling their psychic talents in impressive displays of mental dominance and deception, the elali loathe to use their powers on the unwilling. This self-imposed ban on the unethical abuse of their abilities—as well as their dwindling population and slow reproductive cycle—is all that keeps them from becoming a conquering force in the universe; a well-known fact by other species, especially their enemies among the Ultari Hegemony. Only marginally shorter in stature than an average-sized human, elali commonly stand 5-1/2 feet tall and weigh around 120 pounds.

Ecology

Originating on the mountainous, arboreal world of Ternastra, the elali developed in the shadows of massive, translucent, fungal-like trees which filtered much of the light from the world's twin, blue-white suns. They developed nascent psychic abilities as a defense against the world's fiercest predators, hiding in small, migrating communes among such forests. Only after millennia eking out a living while being hunted, did the first elali ascend into the mountains and skies of their planet. Settling on the tops of the gargantuan fungal blooms and highest peaks, the elali created their first true settlements, made from the picked carcasses of the colossal beasts, below. From this moment, the elali race learned what it meant to truly look down upon other creatures, safe from reprisal and able to develop their culture at a pace of their own choosing.

One of the few species to directly interact with the immortal Patrons, the elali once again adapted to the greater multiverse after accepting an interplanetary gate connected to the Weave. Mastering psychic trickery, they took the form of other humanoid species, often passing among them as idealized versions of the local culture to better influence civilizations in positive ways. Unfortunately, psychic communication with these initial species often led to misunderstandings, fear, or—in extreme cases—terrible accidents, with the elali unintentionally overriding the synapses of lesser species and rendering them in a state of permanent catatonia. Since then, the elali have grown more accustomed to neural differences within other species, though psychic intrusion still results in moments of deep shock. For this reason, elali prefer telepathy for communication, reserving the direct sharing of minds only for others of their kind.

Habitat & Society

The peaceful elali abhor war even when it proves absolutely necessary. Capable of extending psychic energy into the very weapons they wield, only a handful embrace martial traditions because of their aversion to violence. Instead, most use deception to avoid combat or turn enemies against one another. This prevents them from inflicting lasting harm on others, as they believe the mind is always far more important than the flesh. Because of this, elali particularly guard against psychic enemies, especially those among the Ultari Hegemony.

Elali almost always live among the societies of other worlds, appearing as a member of the native species while manipulating events until a situation warrants their direct hand. From this position, they work to influence important leaders and improve the lives and advancement of their adopted species. When discovered or confronted about their presence, the elali use more invasive psychic powers to carefully alter memories and disappear, cultivating new identities and new relationships to continue their work. Because of this activity, members of the Hegemony often paint the elali as master manipulators, meddling in the affairs of lesser species for nefarious reasons, and the elali are then forced to repair and defend their reputation once revealed.

Small groups of more adventurous elali occasionally explore the Weave on scouting missions to discover or intervene among the neutral worlds of the multiverse coveted by rival forces. Able to remain hidden for years at a time, these agents foment resistance to brutal dictators and Hegemony incursions, especially any outbreaks of the vile assimilation strains manufactured by the jagdaline. Such atrocities always evoke a more militaristic approach by the elali, as they know full well the dangers an assimilation strain can pose to unprepared species yet to discover the dangers of the greater multiverse. On worlds not yet under the direct threat of the Ultari Hegemony, visiting elali covertly act to uplift a local species in hopes of discouraging interstellar conflict and guide peaceful outcomes toward interplanetary diplomacy and unification.

Outside their sojourns across the cosmos, groups of elali also hold council among the greatest strongholds of the Bellanic Accord, often debating the greater actions of the coalition's multiracial alliance while discussing the master plan of their enigmatic Patrons. Even so, the elali rarely show themselves beyond mandatory appearances among the leaders of the Accord, preferring to spend their individual time contemplating Patron philosophy and pursuing the shared revelations of the vast neural network provided by their kind.

Advanced elali gravitate toward certain spell-like abilities at higher CRs, including *dominate person*, *mass suggestion*, *nondetection*, and *teleport*.

Jagladine

Dark, chitinous scales cover the thin legs, multiple forelimbs, and narrow facial features of this tall, spindly creature, its inscrutable gaze peering intently about its surroundings.

JAGLADINE CR 1 EXPERT

XP 400

NE Medium monstrous humanoid (jagladine)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +10

DEFENSE HP 17

EAC 11; **KAC** 12

Fort +1; **Ref** +3; **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities fast healing 2; **Immunities** disease, poison

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee survival knife +7 (1d4 S) or
tactical dueling sword +7 (1d6 S)

Ranged azimuth laser pistol +5 (1d4+1 F; critical burn 1d4)

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +0; **Con** +1; **Int** +4; **Wis** +; **Cha** +1

Skills Bluff +5, Intimidate +10, Life Science +10, Medicine +5

Languages Aklo, Common, Ultari, Jagladine

Other Abilities multi-armed, reflexive biology

Gear azimuth laser pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), survival knife, tactical dueling sword

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary, pair, or research enclave (3–8 plus 20 klaven)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Multi-Armed (Ex) A jagladine has four arms, which allows them to wield and hold up to four hands' worth of weapons and equipment. While their multiple arms increase the number of items they can have at the ready, it doesn't increase the number of attacks they can make during combat.

Reflexive Biology (Ex) As a full-round action, a jagladine can absorb a single disease or poison effect without suffering any ill conditions. As a swift action while it has such an effect absorbed, it can attempt a Fortitude save against the DC of the absorbed disease or poison to excrete a liquified version of the disease or poison. If successful, this excretion remains potent for the next 24 hours. The liquified version of the disease or poison must be applied via ingestion or injury. A jagladine can only store one disease or poison at a time; further disease and poison effects are ignored per their racial immunity.

Of all the member species within the Ultari Hegemony—save the ultari themselves—the jagladine represent the clearest threat to the multiverse. Bereft of the guiding morality found in other species, they see themselves on the cusp of becoming 'living gods'—a self-ascribed title vacated by the more ancient Patons and Principalities which preceded them. Expert biologists in the extreme, the jagladine maintain a research enclaves on dozens of unclaimed worlds, hard at work on developing a means to dominate other species and assimilate them into their growing base of power. From these scientific outposts, the jagladine routinely tamper with the natural evolution of native creatures and pathogens, caring not for the repercussions their research has on the greater multiverse.

Embodying a curious mix of reptilian and insectoid traits, jagladine have a toughened hide for added protection, and display an unnerving knack for crawling about on even the most difficult of surfaces. To compensate for their woefully average physique, they also enjoy a natural immunity to disease and poison, even cultivating an internal means of storing such toxins for future use through their enhanced biology. Typically taller than a human, a jagladine stands 6 feet tall and weighs around 150 pounds.

Jagladine Subtype

Required Type: Monstrous humanoid.

Traits: darkvision 60 ft.; low-light vision; fast healing 2 (increases to 5 at CR 8, and to 10 at CR 14); immunity to disease and poison; climb 20 ft.; multi-armed; gains reflexive biology ability.

Multi-armed (Ex): See above.

Reflexive Biology (Ex): See above.

From their racial roots on a now forgotten desert world, the primitive jagladine relocated enmasse to the lush planet of Ursah Kulluh after accidently opening a gate left behind by the Patrons. They've thrived in their new home ever since, jealously guarding its unique ecosystem to take advantage of its primordial swamps which evoke mysterious evolutions in those who dwell there. Indeed, the jagladine species has collectively benefited by the transformations of this unique resource, transforming themselves to harden their bodies against disease and toxins while also extending their natural lifespans. They've also harvested the biomass of these proto-swamps to construct more automated 'progression vats' used to transform other species and grow all manner of bio-organic technologies and weapons—many in use by the Ultari Hegemony.

Highly adaptive to many environments, the jagladine have explored and colonized additional worlds, always seeking to control the gateways which link the planets together. Their ability to dissect newfound fauna and flora has served them well, helping them contend with high-risk threats and fend off would-be rivals vying for territory. Only first-contact with the equally amoral, psychic ultari curbed their march across the multiverse. For a time, these two factions warred against one another, but eventually they realized they could accomplish more by conserving resources and working together. The subsequent acceptance of the jagladine into the Ultari Hegemony opened even greater opportunities for

their species, granting them access to new technologies and resources. Keenly attuned to the nature of living organisms, jagladine also have a social knack for buying time so they can turn larger events to their advantage. Such skills have already catapulted the jagladine into the coveted position of most favored partner within the Hegemony, much to the chagrin of longer-serving allies.

An asexual species, the jagladine have little regard for gender or age. Concepts like male and female mean nothing to them, and they coldly regard all other lifeforms—save a respected few like the ultari—as fodder for experimentation. Guided by a history of harsh climates and brutal regimes, jagladine believe only the strong survive, thus, they show no mercy to anyone. The only jagladine emotion easily identifiable by outsiders resembles that of pride, most typically associated with scientific accomplishments which would horrify other species as barbaric and callous in execution. Such things matter little to the jagladine, as they lack the emotional capability to appreciate such inherent weakness.

Habitat & Society

As a greater species in the Hegemony, the jagladine enjoy a degree of autonomy reserved only for those who have gained the ultari's trust. This stature partly exists because of the jagladine's incredible skill at advancing the Hegemony's cause through genetic enhancement and bio-engineering—especially in weaponized applications. The jagladine have also made excellent scapegoats for the Hegemony's less scrupulous actions, as the ultari frequently deflect criticism of their expansion by blaming atrocities on their jagladine allies. With the end justifying the means, most planetary confrontations between the Hegemony and Bellanic Accord have conveniently relied upon 'rogue jagladine scientists' to pave the way for ultari incursions.

Jagladine immunity to disease and their ability to absorb various bio-toxins has only increased their fascination with bio-organic experimentation. As a result, the Ultari Hegemony often utilizes modern jagladine as living weapons, sending them to coveted worlds to spread assimilation strains used to transform native populations into occupying klaven footsoldiers. What was once a purely natural defense mechanism has become one of the truest testaments to the power of the jagladine race and the Ultari Hegemony they quietly serve.

Most jagladine operate in two, distinct groups: the basic citizenry living in harmony with the rest of the Hegemony, and the scientist caste which works alongside the coalition's military. Both groups primarily abide by the Hegemony's laws more out of self-preservation than any moral imperative to peaceably treat with their fellow citizens. Jagladine scientists have even perfected assimilation strains to pacify and control those who defy ultari rule, constantly growing and expanding the Hegemony's reach through new pathogens and experimental bio-technology while they continue to decipher and operate the gates leading to new worlds.

Within their own culture, jagladine typically cooperate with one another by creating a strict hierarchy based on prior accomplishments and military assets granted them by the ultari. Jagladine are almost always loathe to fight among one another unless they sense a flawless victory without repurcussions is within their reach. Instead, jagladine scientists and overseers far more commonly abandon or betray any who fail to live up to the expectations of the greater group, believing the strong will either survive and re-establish themselves as respected peers, or eliminate themselves through natural selection. The ultari remain a distinct exception to this rule, with the jagladine continuing to show deference to the mind-masters for mutual gain. Most of this adoration is forced, however, as the jagladine know the Hegemony's protection and wordless sanction of their actions helps deflect the attention of other powers who would doubtless unify to stop them otherwise. By swearing loyalty to the ultari and the Hegemony, the jagladine have secured their place in the multiverse. Only the goal of continual advancement and achievement drives them onward, each success another step towards their own apotheosis as the new gods of a new era.

Klaven

This imposing humanoid advances with unblinking, milk-white eyes, its claws and wicked bone spurs ready to rend as green, calcified skin covers its body like a hardened exoskeleton.

KLAVEN FOOTSOLDIER **CR 1/2 COMBATANT**

XP 200

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +0

DEFENSE HP 13

EAC 10; **KAC** 12

Fort +4; **Ref** +2; **Will** +0; +2 vs. disease, ingested poison, nauseated, and sickened

Immunities fear

Weaknesses malign influence

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical battleaxe +6 (1d8+3 S) or bone spur +6 (1d6+3 S)

Ranged spur rifle +3 (1d6 P)

STATISTICS

Str +3; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** –1; **Wis** +0; **Cha** –1

Skills Athletics +4, Intimidate +9, Stealth +4 (+8 in forest or jungle)

Languages Common, Ultari

Special Abilities converted host, energy modulation (1/day), nanite exchange

Gear tactical battleaxe (as longsword), spur rifle (see page 67) with 5 spurs

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Converted Host (Ex) Klaven transformations leave nothing to allow for restoration of a base creature to its original self. As a result, klaven cannot be killed and returned to life with *raise dead* or similar effects, though spells such as *miracle* and *wish* could be used to do so.

Energy Modulation (Su) Once per day as a reaction, a klaven foot soldier can treat positive and negative energy effects as if it were an undead creature, taking damage from positive energy and healing damage from negative energy. This effect lasts until the start of the klaven's next turn.

Malign Influence (Su) Klaven take a –2 penalty to resist charm and mind-affecting (compulsion) effects from evil creatures. This penalty increases to –6 if the creature also has the jagladine subtype.

Nanite Exchange (Su) Klaven nanites swarm around each klaven on a microscopic level, providing a continuous awareness of the location and condition of other klaven within 60 feet, as the *status* spell. Klaven can communicate with one another by passing memories and sensory information through their nanites, but must come into physical contact to do so. This exchange of memories requires a full-round action and only consists of perceptions and first-hand experiences. Klaven cannot exchange skills, special abilities, or other individual qualities in this manner.

KLAVEN SHOCKTROOPER **CR 2 COMBATANT**

XP 600

Klaven soldier

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +7

DEFENSE HP 25

EAC 13; **KAC** 16

Fort +6; **Ref** +2; **Will** +3; +2 vs. disease, ingested poison, nauseated, and sickened

Immunities fear

Weaknesses malign influence

OFFENSE

Speed 25 ft.

Melee carbon steel battleaxe +10 (1d10+6 S; critical bleed 1d6) or bone spur +10 (1d6+6 S)

Ranged spur rifle +7 (1d6+2 P) or incendiary grenade I +7 (explode [5 ft., 1d6 F plus 1d4 burn, DC 11])

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (hit-and-run)

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** –1; **Wis** +0; **Cha** –1

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidate +12, Stealth +7 (+11 in forest or jungle)

Feats Cleave, Opening Volley, Strike Back

Languages Common, Ultari

SPECIAL ABILITIES

converted host, energy modulation (1/day), nanite exchange

Gear hidden soldier armor, carbon steel battleaxe (as carbon steel curve blade), spur rifle (see page 67) with 5 spurs, incendiary grenades I (2)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Converted Host (Ex) Klaven transformations leave nothing to allow for restoration of a base creature to its original self. As a result, klaven cannot be killed and returned to life with *raise dead* or similar effects, though spells such as *miracle* and *wish* could be used to do so.

Energy Modulation (Su) Once per day as a reaction, a klaven foot soldier can treat positive and negative energy effects as if it were an undead creature, taking damage from positive energy and healing damage from negative energy. This effect lasts until the start of the klaven's next turn.

Malign Influence (Su) Klaven take a –2 penalty to resist charm and mind-affecting (compulsion) effects from evil creatures. This penalty increases to –6 if the creature also has the jagladine subtype.

Nanite Exchange (Su) Klaven nanites swarm around each klaven on a microscopic level, providing a continuous awareness of the location and condition of other klaven within 60 feet, as the *status* spell. Klaven can communicate with one another by passing memories and sensory information through their nanites, but must come into physical contact to do so. This exchange of memories requires a full-round action and only consists of perceptions and first-hand experiences. Klaven cannot exchange skills, special abilities, or other individual qualities in this manner.

Klaven are an artificially created species, incrementally modified to serve the jagladine—and by extension, the Ultari Hegemony—as foot soldiers and shocktroops. Their jagladine masters perfected this process to transform natives of conquered worlds into an occupying force. The conversion protocol begins with a creature's infection, typically by a virus referred to as an assimilation strain, which introduces nanites to remap a victim's brain patterns and overall psychology, predisposing them towards evil. The second stage requires a fitted *mindslave harness*, which conditions victims towards complete obedience, reception of telepathic commands, and eventual networking with others of its kind. Those who survive these experiences become candidates for full conversion into klaven, a process which involves submersion into vats of organic mutagens to amplify the victim's strength, alter the visual spectrum of its eyes, and grow natural claws. Klaven typically have greenish skin and milky-white eyes, with smooth hairless skin calcified into a hard, armored exoskeleton overlaying their former physiology.

The final result draws horror-worthy comparisons to an undead monstrosity, but all klaven are still living soldiers. Those familiar with klaven biology realize their appearance often signals an assimilation plague has already run its course, but klaven lack all memory of their former lives, devoid of compassion and slaying others without hesitation. Only officers possess the ability to speak, with all others communicating purely through an exchange of nanites. Their jagladine masters also have the technological means to tap into their neural network, monitoring the condition of their soldiers while remotely issuing commands. It is believed the Hegemony's weaponeers also occasionally download their soldiers' memories, analyzing their experiences for further insights into those they encounter.

Klaven Template Graft (CR 1/2+)

Any living or recently deceased animal or humanoid creature can be infected with a jagladine assimilation strain and fitted with a *mindslave harness* to become a klaven. An intact dead creature that meets these prerequisites can be revived as a klaven within 48 hours of their death. If similar actions are performed on a living creature, they can be converted into a klaven within 8 hours. Upon transformation, klaven are healed of all prior ability and physical damage, including that caused by a jagladine assimilation virus.

Required Creature Type: Animal, humanoid, magical beast, or monstrous humanoid.

Required Array: Combatant.

Alignment: LE, though in rare cases, some creatures react poorly to the effects of an assimilation strain and instead become neutral evil or chaotic evil.

Traits: Darkvision 60 ft.; immunity to fear; malign influence (see below); +2 to saving throws against disease, ingested poison, and the nauseated and sickened conditions; gains natural bone spur attack (P or S) using high attack value and damage appropriate to CR.

Skills: Master or good Intimidate; gains +4 bonus to Stealth checks in forest/jungle terrain.

Abilities: Converted host (see below), energy modulation (see below), nanite exchange (see below).

Converted Host (Ex): Klaven transformations leave nothing to allow for restoration of a base creature to its original self. As a result, klaven cannot be killed and returned to life with *raise dead* or similar effects, though spells such as *miracle* and *wish* could be used to do so.

Energy Modulation (Su): As a reaction, a klaven can treat positive and negative energy effects as if it were an undead creature, taking damage from positive energy and healing damage from negative energy. This effect lasts until the start of the klaven's next turn. The ability can be used once per day at CR 1; twice per day at CR 8; and three times per day at CR 12.

Malign Influence (Su): Klaven take a –2 penalty to resist charm and compulsion effects from evil creatures. This penalty increases to –6 if the creature also has the jagladine subtype.

Nanite Exchanges (Su): Klaven nanites swarm around each klaven on a microscopic level, providing a continuous awareness of the location and condition of other klaven

within 60 feet, as the *status* spell. The range of this ability increases to 100 feet for klaven of CR 8 or higher, and up to 1 mile for klaven of CR 12 or higher. Klaven can communicate with one another by passing memories and sensory information through their nanites, but must come into physical contact to do so. This exchange of memories requires a full-round action and only consists of perceptions and first-hand experiences. Klaven cannot exchange skills, special abilities, or other individual qualities in this manner.

Suggested Ability Modifiers: Strength, Constitution. A klaven's minimum Intelligence modifier is –4, even for animals.

Warbeast, Klaven

The white eyes and calcified fur of this large wolf belies its alien nature as it advances with a menacing snarl.

KLAVEN WARBEAST CR 2 COMBATANT

XP 600

LE Medium animal

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +12

DEFENSE HP 25

EAC 13; **KAC** 15

Fort +6; **Ref** +6; **Will** +1; +2 vs. disease, ingested poison, nauseated, and sickened

Immunities fear

Weaknesses malign influence

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee bite +10 (1d6+6 P plus jagladine neurotoxin and trip) or claw +10 (1d6+6 S)

Offensive Abilities poison

STATISTICS

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** –4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** –1

Skills Intimidate +7, Stealth +7 (+11 in forests or jungles)

Languages Common, Ultari (can't speak any language)

Special Abilities converted host, energy modulation (1/day), nanite exchange

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Converted Host (Ex) Klaven transformations leave nothing to allow for restoration of a base creature to its original self. As a result, klaven cannot be killed and returned to life with *raise dead* or similar effects, though spells such as *miracle* and *wish* could be used to do so.

Energy Modulation (Su) As a reaction, a klaven can treat positive and negative energy effects as if it were an undead creature, taking damage from positive energy and healing damage from negative energy. This effect lasts until the start of the klaven's next turn. The ability can be used once per day at CR 1; twice per day at CR 8; and three times per day at CR 12.

Malign Influence (Su) Klaven take a –2 penalty to resist charm and mind-affecting (compulsion) effects from evil creatures. This penalty increases to –6 if the creature also has the jagladine subtype.

Nanite Exchange (Su) Klaven nanites swarm around each klaven on a microscopic level, providing a continuous awareness of the location and condition of other klaven within 60 feet, as the *status* spell. The range of this ability increases to 100 feet for klaven of CR 8 or higher, and up to 1 mile for klaven of CR 12 or higher. Klaven can communicate with one another by passing memories and sensory information through their nanites, but must come into physical contact to do so. This exchange of memories requires a full-round action and only consists of perceptions and first-hand experiences. Klaven cannot exchange skills, special abilities, or other individual qualities in this manner.

Trip (Ex) When a klaven warbeast hits with its bite attack, it deals damage normally, but if its attack hits the target's KAC + 4, it also knocks the target prone.

JAGLADINE NEUROTOXIN

Type poison (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 11

Track Constitution (special); **Frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds

Effect progression track is Healthy—Weakened—Weakened—Unconscious; no end state.

Cure 1 save

Klaven warbeasts are engineered by their jagladine masters to produce a nanite-based neurotoxin which interferes with the higher brain functions and central nervous system of living targets. The nanites attack a victim's mind, racking them with terrible agony. While potent, this effect is never compounded by additional applications of the poison until the first nanites have run their course.

Shaped by a modification of lupine species with an assimilation strain, klaven warbeasts are the most common non-humanoid klaven employed by the Hegemony. As a result of their transformation, the afflicted wolf is granted a rudimentary intelligence, thereby allowing communication with other klaven and the ability to understand (but not speak) the languages of the Hegemony. This newfound intellect means little to a warbeast, whose entire existence is determined by its jagladine superiors. Adorned with a thick upper carapace with the consistency of layered scales, a typical klaven warbeast stands 3 feet tall and weighs 160 pounds.

Variations: A klaven warbeast is the result of creating a creature with the animal type and the klaven template graft (see page 62). Larger, mountable creatures—known as klaven warsteeds—can be created in a similar process with a Large creature. Warsteeds are the second most common variety of animal-based klaven offspring, often used by klaven commanders as personal mounts in the field.

Other animal breeds infected with the assimilation strain undergo conversion with varying degrees of success. Jagladine scientists maintain hidden outposts on several unclaimed worlds, vying to successfully apply the strain on apex predators, in hopes of creating a revolutionary weapon. The very nature of their mission requires the jagladine to occupy locations inhabited by the most powerful of creatures, ranging from dinosaurs to extinct megafauna. Thankfully for the rest of the multiverse, these experiments have met with limited success, and the Hegemony employs only a handful of such death-dealing monstrosities.

Tauslek

The carapace of this large centipede-like creature is black and green, with snapping mandibles as its four alien eyes radiate a spectrum of rainbow-colored light like backlit prisms.

TAUSLEK **CR 1/2 COMBATANT**

XP 200

N Small aberration

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +4

DEFENSE HP 13

EAC 10; **KAC** 12

Fort +2; **Ref** +2; **Will** +2

Immunities mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +5 (1d6+2 P plus prism venom)

Offensive Abilities steal memories

STATISTICS

Str +2; **Dex** +0; **Con** +1; **Int** –4; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +3

Feats Step Up

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +4

Languages Aklo

Other Abilities voice mimic

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate ruins/dungeons or underground

Organization solitary, pair, community (3–10)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Voice Mimic (Ex) A tauslek can perfectly imitate voices of any creature and gains a +8 racial bonus on Bluff checks to duplicate a voice (including accents and speech patterns) it has listened to for at least 10 minutes. It cannot replicate language-dependent abilities or effects and doesn't speak a language it doesn't already know, though it can replicate the sound thereof. A creature listening to the mimicry can attempt a Sense Motive check opposed by the tauslek's Bluff check to recognize the mimicry; if the listener isn't familiar with the person being imitated, it takes a –8 penalty on its check.

Steal Memories (Ex) When a tauslek kills an enemy with its bite attack, it can extract the memories and Intelligence of its victim as a free action. It temporarily gains an Intelligence modifier equal to its victim, all languages the victim spoke, and an equivalent total skill bonus for all skills based on mental ability scores (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) which the victim had when they died (including skills like Sense Motive and Bluff). These benefits last 24 + 2d12 hours, after which they fade entirely. Despite this advantage, tausleks are strictly limited in their capacity to utilize certain skills due to their physical form. The tauslek also gains familiarity with a victim's past, their relationships with other creatures, and a sense of their personality. This awareness does not govern the tauslek's actions, but may be used to trick its intended prey. Tausleks never gain spells, spell-like abilities, or other special abilities or class abilities the victim may have had.

If a tauslek slays additional creatures while benefiting from this ability, it continues to acquire more memories, but only maintains the single highest Intelligence score and skill bonuses of the creatures it devours (that is, it keeps the highest total skill bonus of any skill thus far, but never compounds them). Furthermore, devouring another victim with an Intelligence score of 6 or higher (or an equivalent modifier) resets the duration on all of the personalities it has subsumed. When the tauslek reverts to normal, it loses all its stolen personalities and bonuses at once. This ability has no affect on spells which require a victim's soul to restore them to life, as the tauslek only acquires a copy of the stolen memories.

PRISM VENOM

Type poison (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 9

Track Wisdom; **Frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds

Cure 1 save

TAUSLEK MATRIARCH **CR 3 COMBATANT**

XP 800

NE Large aberration

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

DEFENSE HP 40

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +7; **Ref** +2; **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities fast healing 2; **Immunities** mind-affecting effects, poison

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6+7 P plus grab and matriarch prism venom)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Offensive Abilities mesmerizing stare, steal memories, supernatural haste

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** –2; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +1

Feats Step Up

Skills Athletics +13, Intimidate +8

Languages Aklo

Other Abilities voice mimic

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Grab (Ex) When the tauslek matriarch hits with its bite attack, it deals normal damage, but if the attack roll hits the target's KAC + 4, it also automatically grapples the foe as a free action, or pins the target if it hits KAC + 13. The tauslek matriarch can maintain the grab on subsequent rounds either by hitting again with its bite attack or by performing the grapple combat maneuver normally.

Mesmerizing Stare (Su) Creatures currently affected by a tauslek's poison (whether from a matriarch's venom or that of one of its younglings) who stand within 30 feet and can see the eyes of a tauslek matriarch become fascinated until the line of sight between them is broken or interrupted (Will DC 12 negates). Creatures which become fascinated do not become immune to this ability if the effect ends. This is a mind-affecting effect.

Steal Memories (Ex) Tauslek matriarchs have a similar memory-stealing power to their lesser kin (see above). A tauslek matriarch maintains its benefits for 1d4+1 days, after which they fade into the creature's subconscious. Unlike a normal

tauslek, a matriarch can call forth previously consumed intellects from her subconscious as a full-round action, gaining the benefits of a particular creature's consumed Intelligence modifier for 2d10 rounds before the intellect drifts away. A tauslek matriarch can only recall a previously consumed intellect once per week.

Supernatural Haste (Su) A tauslek matriarch can take one additional move action each round. This allows it to take a move action even if it has also taken a full action that round.

MATRIARCH PRISM VENOM

Type poison (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 12
Track Wisdom; **Frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds
Cure 2 consecutive saves

The tauslek was first discovered by jagladine explorers on a forgotten world many centuries ago. Since then, they've been subjected to repeated research and experimentation with the tauslek's unusual ability to acquire memories and intellects spawning a number of bio-engineered technologies pertaining to memory extraction and manipulation. Young tausleks are roughly the size of a small dog, while the more advanced matriarchs rival a large horse. They most closely resemble centipedes with two scintillating eyes and a fierce set of mandibles capable of piercing armor. The plates of their carapace are green and outlined in black towards the end of their length. Although tausleks may appear as vermin, an adult matriarch proves far more cunning than any low-order animal, one of the many advantages it uses to hunt sentient prey. In rural areas, tausleks have enough presence of mind to attack less dangerous children, while avoiding guard animals and more mindful adults.

Communities of tauslek prefer remote nesting sites, located within a short distance of well-travelled roadways or small settlements. Intellect absorbed by slain prey imparts the tauslek with enough insight to seek shelter back at their nest. By the time their boosted mental capacity wears off, the now animalistic urges drive it to seek further sustenance, thus repeating the cycle. Complications often arise during these hit-and-run tactics when it slays adventurers and community guardians attempting to route them. More often than not, the tauslek use the newly acquired memories from such encounters to take advantage of what their would-be killers know to inflict further harm on the communities which sent them.

A tauslek matriarch is a nightmare to behold, a ravenous beast eager to carry off prey and devour its mind one memory at a time. Weighing nearly 500 pounds, it manages to permanently retain some of its stolen intellects, able to call on specific memories from its subconscious when necessary. A matriarch lives well beyond the hunting instincts of an animal, because it doesn't merely hunt to survive, lusting instead for power, the savored intellects to improve itself, and the shared insights to terrorize others. As such, they prefer to grab lone opponents and retreat with them into cover where they can consume the memories of a held foe. Once it slays this initial target, the matriarch then uses the stolen memories to coax the creature's remaining allies into an ambush, where it repeats the process. Enhancing its own frightening reputation, tauslek matriarchs create a temporary bond with those infected by the poison of its kind, able to perform subtle sinuous motions to captivate those succumbing to the poison's effects.

Members of the Bellianic Accord blame the appearance of tauslek matriarchs on their Hegemony enemies, claiming such creatures never existed on other worlds before the meddling of jagladine scientists spread their threat across the multiverse. These 'slanderous rumors' as decreed by the Hegemony are in fact true—the mythic nature of the tauslek matriarch is directly tied to genetic modifications performed by the jagladine intent on weaponizing the tauslek for the Hegemony. Indeed, the inevitable result of these experiments created the matriarch—now considered a blight throughout worlds of both the Bellanic Accord and Ultari Hegemony, each blaming the other for smuggling these enhanced tauslek past their respective borders.

Even among Hegemony worlds, tausleks are well known and feared. Their appearance often signals extreme torture and interrogation by jagladine inquisitors intent on breaking the will and minds of their captives. The jagladine maintain that tauslek research has led to significant breakthroughs in intelligence gathering, the psychoanalysis of new alien species, and psionic enhancement. But cultivating and taming a tauslek nest has proven a daunting task even for their fearless klaven jailors in service to the jagladine. As a result, most Hegemony worlds have strict regulations concerning the importation and trade of tauslek livestock to other worlds and ecosystems.

Alien Treasures

Assassin's Band — Level 6

Magic Item (Worn)
Price 4,200 **Bulk** L

DESCRIPTION

This intricate, crystalline bracelet portrays excellent craftsmanship with a hinge and clasp to snap over the wrist. Upon command (a standard action), it forms either a basic one-handed melee weapon of item level 4 or lower chosen by the wearer, or a light shield that functions as a force field (brown) armor upgrade. Neither the shield nor the weapon may be disarmed, stolen, or sundered, but they are vulnerable to spells and effects which affect force, such as *dispel magic and disintegrate. Once created, the object remains in its chosen form and cannot be changed, though the wearer may deactivate the assassin's band and reactivate it the following round to produce a different form. The assassin's band can function for up to 3 minutes per day, usable in 1-minute increments.*

Aeon Stone, Cobalt Prism — Level 12

Magic Item
Price 13,600 **Bulk** —

DESCRIPTION

The owner of this *aeon stone is immune to daze effects while it is in orbit. In addition, it provides a +2 competence bonus to saving throws against mind-affecting effects. If the owner ever fails a saving throw against a mind-affecting effect, she can immediately reroll the save, taking the result of the second roll even if it is lower. This effect can be used three times before the stone burns out, turning a dull gray and forever useless.*

Gem of Recall — Level 6

Magic Item (Worn)
Price 4,350 **Bulk** —

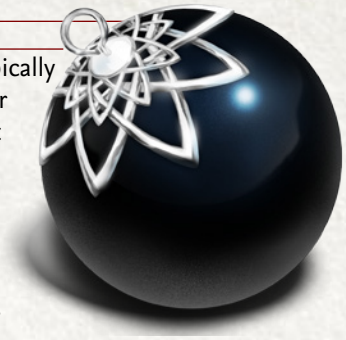
DESCRIPTION

As a standard action once per day, the bearer of this stone can recall one 1st-level spell she has already cast that day and cast it again. Activating the stone does not use one of her spell slots, and she can activate it even if she doesn't have any 1st-level spell slots remaining for the day. She can only use the gem to cast a spell she has already cast that day, even if she knows other spells.

Projection Periapt — Level 8

Magic Item (Worn)
Price 9,925 **Bulk** —

DESCRIPTION



This polished obsidian sphere typically hangs from a fine chain or leather cord. When activated, it seeks out a sentient creature with which the wearer is already familiar and creates an illusory image of the wearer near it, allowing two-way communication. The creature must be within 1 mile of the wearer, or else the attempt fails. The wearer can speak through the illusion, as well as see and hear its surroundings; however, the wearer's actual body becomes blind and deaf to anything near it while using the periapt. The device can be used once per day, and the illusory image maintained for up to 1 minute. If the intended creature also wears a *projection periapt, the range of communication increases to 10 miles, and the connection lasts up to 10 minutes.*

Rejuvenation Vine — Level 3

Hybrid Item
Price 400 **Bulk** —

DESCRIPTION

This leafy, green tendril extends only a single foot in length with a small, barbed thorn at either end. When wrapped around a wearer's wrist or neck, it provides increased healing properties over an extended period of time regardless of activity. Once the barbs pierce the wearer's flesh, the vine doubles the wearer's natural rates of healing for wounds and ability damage for up to 3 days before withering and becoming useless. If the wearer is infected with a non-magical disease or poison while wearing a *rejuvenation vine, it also provides a +2 enhancement bonus to the wearer's continuing saving throws to resist the disease or poison over the same time period.*

DEATHBLOOM NECTAR **LEVEL 4 PRICE 685**

Type poison (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 14
Track Constitution; **Frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds
Cure 1 save

DESCRIPTION

The collected venom from the deathbloom can be purchased separately from its weaponized stamens. Independent of the nutrients provided by the flower, it only lasts for 3 days before slowly losing its potency, lowering the poison's DC by 1 for each day thereafter, and finally becoming fully inert after 1 week.

Deathbloom Stamen: This weapon is often harvested by chlorvians and used in ritualistic duels among their kind, but it has also found its way onto the black market and into the hands of various assassins. The deathbloom itself is a flower the size of a human head, resembling a cross between a rose and an orchid with deep purple petals edged and veined in crimson. The bloom sits atop a leafy stalk some seven feet in height, its end capped in a flask of nutrient fluid which feeds a deadly nectar into the flower's stamen. When harvested, these stamens harden into sharp piercing weapons, still containing a dose of the poisonous nectar within them. Those proficient in wielding deathbloom stamens can break off the sharpened end inside a victim, automatically releasing its venom. The nutrient fluid inside a stamen can remain active for up to a week, or twice as long if kept partially submerged in water. This is an uncategorized, one-handed advanced melee weapon.

Ekutar: A metal version of a boomerang with a sharpened blade along its inner edge, the ekutar first appeared among the zvarr who created it as a thrown weapon for use while gliding. Unlike a standard boomerang, the ekutar can be thrown in a manner so it returns to its wielder while on the move if it misses its target, returning at the end of the round. If the ekutar successfully strikes an opponent, it doesn't return, either remaining embedded in the victim, or falling in the same square where it hit. An ekutar wielder typically wears a heavy gauntlet with which to catch the returning weapon. Anyone without such protection, takes the weapon's full damage when catching it. This is an uncategorized, one-handed advanced melee weapon.

Spur Rifle: Designed by the jagladine for use by their klaven footsoldiers, this ranged weapon fires thorny projectiles of a hard, resin-like substance, and can hold up to six spurs at a time in a self-contained case attached to the stock. As long as the rifle holds ammunition, its wielder can ready a new projectile with a free action, but loading a new case requires a full-round action which provokes attacks of opportunity. The jagladine grow the various components for spur rifles from organic biomass cultivated in the swamps of their homeworld, making them immune to spells such as *heat metal* and *warp wood*, but they still count as objects for the purposes of other spells and effects. The spurs themselves are porous and easily poisoned, often bearing jagladine toxins used to incapacitate other species for capture, interrogation, and experimentation. This is a longarm in the projectile category with a range of 80 feet.

Lieutenant Spur Rifle: Issued only to jagladine lieutenants or those higher in rank, the lieutenant spur rifle functions identically to the typical spur rifle, but it deals more damage and gains the critical hit effect injection DC +2.

Trinity Blade: This tretharri weapon resembles a punching dagger with a pair of curved blades projecting from the end of each of its horizontal handles. The four-armed tretharri often wield such weapons with deadly effect. It is an uncategorized, one-handed basic melee weapon.

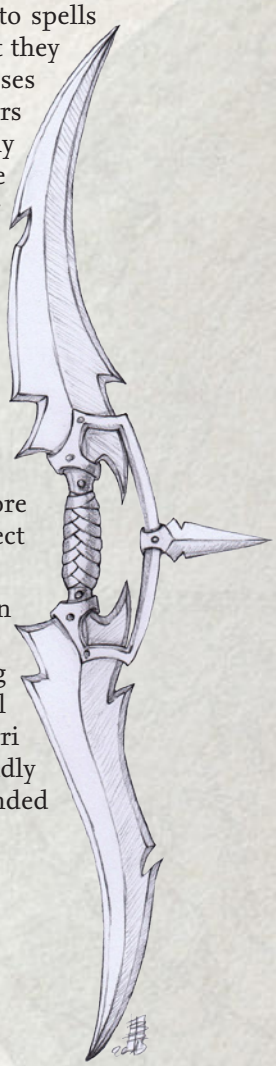


Table: New Weapons

Weapon	Level	Price	Damage	Critical	Range	Capacity	Usage	Bulk	Special
Deathbloom stamen	4	875	1d4 P	—	—	—	—	1	Analog, poison (see text)
Ekutar	3	1,960	1d8 S	Bleed 1d4	30 ft.	—	—	L	Analog, thrown (30 ft.), see text
Spur rifle	1	100	1d6 P	—	80 ft.	6 spurs	1	1	Analog, see text
Lieutenant spur rifle	3	2,250	1d10 P	Injection DC +2	80 ft.	6 spurs	1	1	Analog, see text
Trinity blade	4	2,800	1d8 S	—	—	—	—	L	Analog, operative

Gazetteer

World at the Crossroads

"Zel-Argose ain't for the faint of heart, lass, nor the timid. She's the wonder of this world and a few others besides. Dozens of currencies get exchanged on her streets every day, but there's one coin that'll trump them all—power. To have it, you gotta know the right people and the right places to go. Or, you gotta have enough steel in your spine to stare down the worst monsters and misfits you've ever seen. 'Cause other cities and planets all have their aliens, true enough, but Zel-Argose is packed with 'em. Stinks to the high heavens with 'em! And behind every pinch-faced set of bug-eyes, there's an agenda you know nothing about. They all say they come to buy and to sell, or to take the next gate to someplace else, but that ain't the half of it. No ma'am. One way or another, they're also comin' for you and me. That's because we're all scratchin' and clawin' for an advantage in this multiverse. And, one day, your eyes will open, and you'll understand what I mean..."—Zanin Gaf-Hanen, traveling merchant of Argosa

Within the Legendary Worlds Campaign Setting, Argosa represents a rare hub world, which means it supports multiple gates to other planets and holds tremendous value as a vibrant nexus of trade and transportation. Argosa's unusual abundance of interplanetary gates traces back to a time before living memory, when more ancient cultures shaped its future. Scholars and archeologists have surmised that life nearly disappeared on Argosa millions of years ago, presumably in the aftermath of the ancient wars that raged between the Patrons and their evil counterparts, the Principalities. The gates were among the few structures to survive that time, proving almost indestructible despite the forces unleashed around them, or the erosion of time. Given eons to recover, Argosa eventually healed, and many of the now native inhabitants believe the Patrons evolved their race to survive the conflict, making them the inheritors of everything left behind. But the elder races which traveled to Argosa—such as the elali—know the truth. At some point, interplanetary explorers reopened the gates to Argosa, returning to resettle its lands, and most without fully understanding the bones left behind by the much greater culture of the Patrons. But these opportunistic squatters readily reaped the benefits of that legacy by seizing control of the gates reaching the wider multiverse.

While very Earth-like in size, gravity, and length of day, Argosa still has its own unique, physical identity. Two major continents comprise its livable surface, excluding various island chains. A large portion remains covered by ocean, and rising sea levels have covered some of the coastal ruins once belonging to the Patrons. The planet's climate and terrain also vary, with thick jungle and forested shores giving way to an inner desert claiming most landlocked areas. Sustainable soil exists primarily near sources of frequent irrigation, such as rivers and the few remaining swamps along the coastland. Scientists among the elder races surmise the interior desert results from an ongoing ecological weapon detonated long ago during the ancient conflict—one which has lost potency over the intervening years.

Argosa has no singular government representing the entire planet. Instead, civilized factions formed many different political systems over the years, each heavily influenced or controlled by interstellar empires establishing their own fiefdoms or embassies on the planet—with most of them in its largest city, Zel-Argose. While the local economy includes abundant mineral resources and unique agricultural products, the planet's still-functioning gates to other worlds remain its greatest attribute. These networked portals comprise a vital interest to those who control them and their access to the greater multiverse, and the ruling authorities always tax any goods passing through gates they control. In addition, Argosa conceals several ruins once belonging to the Patrons, most hidden deep underground or just offshore. These locations often attract outside interest, from scholars and tourists to representatives of the Ultiari Hegemony and Bellianic Accord. Native interests on Argosa control access to these sites as strictly as the gates, reluctant to grant exploration rights lest they be cheated out of important and valuable discoveries they can leverage for greater power and influence. But most Argosans would rather leave the past buried than awaken new dangers or surrender such treasures to outsiders.

Argosan Notable Locations

Bay-Livaar: For centuries, many believed no Patron ruins survived on Argosa, but eventually reliable reports convinced a local explorer to capture Bay-Livaar's likeness on an ancient recording device, and the museum in Zel-Argose now displays several images of it. The ruin itself appears infrequently, and at multiple different locations, on the planet's surface. Only consistent and regular landmarks among its remaining structures can reliably identify it, and the site has come under frequent scrutiny by agents of the Accord and the Hegemony. If anyone has actually entered the ruin and returned, they've yet to prove such claims. After a century of research—and the expenditure of no small fortune—the initial fervor over Bay-Livaar has gradually diminished to that of a curiosity, once more dismissed as an optical illusion or an unfathomable dream.

Castle Torgrimm: Home to the famous star titan of the same name, this awe-inspiring structure is scaled to colossal proportions, overwhelming those of lesser stature who dare to approach. The castle makes an impressive landmark even from miles away, built into the side of a mountain within Argosa's badlands. The star titan Torgrimm turns away uninvited guests, as many Hegemony spies have discovered over the years, but stories still circulate about those meeting him under unexpected circumstances and offered great riches in exchange for services on distant worlds. Torgrimm maintains a non-partisan political position, enforcing Argosa's neutrality at the center of the multiverse and allowing the various factions of Zel-Argose to engage in commerce while he pursues his own inscrutable goals off-world.

Kaulvrex Hives: These strange ruptures and boils in the earth give birth to an unusual insectoid species known as the kaulvrex. These three-armed humanoids claim no history on Argosa, but Hegemony emissaries steadfastly disavow knowledge of their origin. The earliest kaulvrex appeared less than two centuries ago, and hunters swear they've become smarter with each encounter. Wardens of Zel-Argose and the surrounding wilds fear the bug-men have tapped into latent psychic abilities allowing them to study other cultures and learn at a rapid rate. Scholars and seekers of Patron artifacts have proposed the kaulvrex may have escaped from one of their underground complexes—taking advantage of ancient technology to evolve and advance their culture. So far, no expedition has penetrated the nesting grounds of a kaulvrex hive to confirm such suspicions.

Pol-Nephair: Pol-Nephair is an undersea city resting on the continental shelf of Argosa's most populated continent. Primary access to Pol-Nephair (other than deep sea diving) is possible through a gate to the aquatic world of Vareen. Explorers believe the original ruins were not underwater and existed long ago as Patron stronghold. Most of Pol-Nephair's current aquatic residents—all immigrants from Vareen—believe a cataclysmic event caused a shift in Argosa's coastline and flooded the city. The would-be colonists now use the gates as an interplanetary trade with their homeworld.

Zel-Argose: The Gateway City

ZEL-ARGOSE

N metropolis

Population 175,379 (10% auttaine, 8% humans, 7% chlorvians, 7% tretharri, 6% catfolk, 6% zor'ess, 6% zvarr, 5% dwarves, 5% krang, 5% loran, 4% bahgra, 4% half-orcs, 3% tengu, 3% vishkanyas, 3% merfolk, 3% elves, 2% gnomes, 2% klaven, 2% half-elves, 2% halflings, 1% strix, 1% nagaji, 1% jagladine, 1% vanaras, 1% tieflings, 1% elali, 1% dhampirs, 3% other [aasimars, bil'djooli, divymm, fetchlings, hetzuud, onaryx, queborrin, ratfolk, ultari, yllosan, and other])

Government secret syndicate (represented by rival coteries)

Qualities magically attuned, notorious, prosperous, rumormongering citizens, strategic location, technologically underdeveloped, tourist attraction

Maximum Item Level 18th

Several nations and empires maintain representation on Argosa, most establishing embassies in Zel-Argose or working to influence local factions to serve as proxies for their interests. Typically, they build their compounds near any gates they can control, especially those which already bridge between worlds they've colonized or conquered. Other, private interests also command certain gates, but these groups seldom control more than a few, at best, and many gates still prove non-functional or damaged in various ways. Zel-Argose contains no less than twelve actively useful gates fostering trade across the broader multiverse. This also makes the city a centerpiece for travel, interspecies diplomacy, and communication. As the largest city of an otherwise independently neutral world, Zel-Argose makes for a cosmopolitan and decadent locale where even hated enemies have occasion to meet and establish common ground, even if only temporarily.

History and Society

Built on the ruins of an ancient Patron city, Zel-Argose has grown in population many times over by adding a continuous stream of immigrants through its many gates connecting to other worlds. Lost records can no longer identify the direct descendants of Argosa's original inhabitants, but Patron ruins clearly point to that ancient civilization's influence in crafting so many gates to the multiverse and fostering the development and evolution of many different species. One popular theory suggests these powerful benefactors established their capital here, attracting, uplifting, or otherwise transporting other species to join them on Argosa. In its more recent history, however, the contemporary city of Zel-Argose struggled to sustain a healthy, self-determined culture. Gangs, which rapidly transformed into criminal merchant cartels called Coteries, immediately seized the various planetary gates as chief cornerstones in their rise to power. Their fractured rule and petty rivalries eventually gained an unsteady equilibrium which has remained the status quo since the city's reoccupation. While Argosa's citizens rigorously pursue current events, no institution exists which makes chronicling ancient history a major priority. Indeed, Zel-Argose has many different cultures comprising its societal norms, and nearly all of them favor the almighty power of commerce over the legacies of the past.

Over the years, a constant influx of aliens and outside influences has further shaped Argosa's society, investing in an effort to rediscover the mathematics, science, magic, and technology the Patrons used to build the planetary gates. As a multicultural melting pot, all manner of goods, services, and advancements have found their way into its markets. Further trade works and crafts have evolved out of the planet's mineral resources, as well as scavenged components from Patron ruins. Although Zel-Argose has a distinct culture and a handful of its own traditions, at its

Argosa's Independence

Argosa maintains an independent stance from larger, interplanetary empires such as the Bellianic Accord and Ultari Hegemony. While external factions war over the greater multiverse, powerful forces on par with the ancient Patrons and Principalities continue to secretly influence Argosa. In fact, while the star titan Torgrimm maintains his colossal stronghold in the remote mountains, an elohim named Zephaniah rests deep within its innermost chambers. This powerful outsider has yet to announce its presence on Argosa, nor its reasons for dwelling on the Material Plane. Instead, Torgrimm serves as its ever loyal guardian, herald, and seneschal.

Agents of the Accord and Hegemony have long resented Torgrimm's influence over Argosa, and suspect the star titan can obtain starflight velocities (similar to a mi-go or shantak) to visit other worlds. While unconfirmed, these suspicions are correct. Like his master, Torgrimm requires no interplanetary gate to deliver swift and terrible vengeance on those who displease his master. To the titan and elohim, Argosa represents a strategic treasure beyond all reckoning, one which they seek to sustain in honor of the Patrons who first shaped the world and brought the multiverse together. As such, Torgrimm has retaliated against past invasions of Argosa on Zephaniah's behalf, crushing those seeking to conquer and control the revived hub-world. Yet, they also ignore the Accord and Hegemony—as well as the larcenous Coteries—as long as such factions maintain Argosa as a neutral, mercantile crossroad and melting pot.

Most elder races of Argosa maintain an honored respect for Torgrimm, taking advantage of the star titan's protection even as some suspect he answers to a master greater than himself. They withhold these suspicions from Argosa's current leaders, fearing what immature races might do if they learned the truth. Some worry Torgrimm or his master might accept worshipers to exert an influence beyond Argosa's gates. Others believe the titan may be called upon to take radical action to ensure his master's seclusion. And some elder sages even suspect the kaulvrex may exist as a manufactured army should the cosmic entity decide the planet requires a sweeping, ecological adjustment.

core lies a patchwork conglomeration of dozens of foreign influences. Outsiders seeking a rich, deep heritage typically find the Gateway City holds thousands of cultures, each identified by their own unique factions centered around whatever gate brought their ancestors to Argosa.

Like its multicultural underpinnings, Zel-Argose also presents an array of religious communities, both locally established and brought from afar. Wherever the poor and oppressed gather, there are those who still turn to the gods for comfort and protection. Some of the city's rulers also seek spiritual guidance, but just as many perpetuate false religions to garner supporters and followers, many bilked of their hard-earned credits for promises of eternal rewards in the afterlife. A faith which wishes to maintain a chapel or temple in Zel-Argose must obtain property like any other business, as well as the means to sustain and defend it. This requires tithes and offerings not merely of currency, but also talent, manpower, and time, leading many to ally with one another to secure such things provided they share similar goals and beliefs.

Law and Government

Auditor Jahera Fire-Eyes (LN female human mystic) serves as Zel-Argose's nominal autocrat. Publicly, she receives nomination from various merchant houses and support from Zel-Argose's ranking citizens—though she gained office through no organized public election. This portrayal is completely fictional, and one of Zel-Argose's less well-kept secrets. The true string-pullers in the city are the nine Coteries. These criminal cartels evolved from what were essentially thieves' guilds which ascertained the value of Argosa's gates during the planet's recolonization. Although the Coteries style themselves as nobility, they adopt only a veneer of aristocracy, still operating as ruthlessly as their cutthroat origins. The Auditor position acts as an agreed-upon figurehead and arbitrator who governs only at their behest—though she's proven a skilled politician in her own right, manipulating leaders of certain Coteries to secretly play one against another through the activities of agents and saboteurs.

Separate from the Auditor's influence, each Coterie maintains an estate which secures their control over one or more gates, which they strive to protect from external threats. These estates serve as waystations for travelers, who often have to pay a toll or tariff for passage into the city or to other worlds. The Coteries usually receive first choice of imports before traders are cleared to enter the marketplace and ply their wares. Collectively, the secret leaders of the nine Coteries are known as the Peerage. And, it's the Peerage which allows Zel-Argose to run itself as overseen by the Auditor. The Auditor is then an appointed position, someone without affiliation to any single Coterie and forever denied adoption into one after their appointment expires. Each Coterie controls at least one gate, with the Avaar, Nambrin, and Thanex coteries controlling two each. Each gate affords a Coterie one vote among the Peerage (called to order when the Coteries wish to intervene directly in a matter), with the Auditor authorized to cast a vote only in order to break a tie.

Under this arrangement, the Coteries have enjoyed a long history of discreet friendship with outside interests from other worlds, including the Ultari Hegemony (ironic because the Peerage is well aware of the Hegemony's predatory nature and inclination towards conquest). The Coteries also foster ties to the Bellianic Accord however, just to maintain equilibrium. The Coteries suffer no political gamesmanship which threatens their collective stranglehold on the city through their Peerage, and their second-worst threat to off-world cultures is to block transit through their gates, whereas their most dire threat is the actual destruction of a gate. The Bellianic Accord once feared the Hegemony might overwhelm Zel-Argose, and so it gave them the secret to permanently disabling the gates to other worlds. Three hundred years ago, the Hegemony tested that resolve under the belief that no Coterie would set aside its own greed to sacrifice such a valuable asset—but the Peerage proved them wrong. At one time, Zel-Argose had 13 active trade gates, but the Thanex Coterie sacrificed one of three in their possession to bring the Hegemony to heel. This matter earned Thanex a reputation for ruthlessness as well as a combination of fear and admiration. Thus, the Auditor acquired its tie-breaking vote to ensure no other Coterie acted in such an independent manner. No interstellar faction has tested the Peerage or attempted direct conquest of Argosa since.

Few laws govern what transpires on the streets of Zel-Argose, but one remains paramount in the eyes of every citizen and the Auditor's enforcers—"Do nothing to interfere with commerce." The gates ensure an astonishing number of exclusive, exotic, and even weird commodities reach the city's marketplace, and everyone prefers that trade continue to flow. Aside from traditional goods and products, drugs, slaves, and uncommon bits of technology can all be found for sale. A local motto among traders states, "Wait long enough and someone will sell it." This assertion proves true more often than not, sometimes leading to exceptionally decadent transactions among the morally bankrupt. When such matters require arbitration from a third party, the Auditor's office typically steps in to deliver swift and non-negotiable resolutions—supported by a contingent of permanent mercenaries at her beck and call. Surprisingly, this system works. Zel-Argose maintains its safety by any means necessary, relying on the vast resources gleaned from its unique power over trade, as well as the self-regulating nature of competing interests and factions running the city.

It's worth noting that the Coteries do maintain one prohibition on well-paying visitors from off-world. The city has seen the Hegemony's assimilation strain before—a virulent disease crafted by the scientific-minded jagladine in service to the ultari. Evidence of the virus is grounds for shutting down a gate to quarantine any outbreak while the city purges the infected. Likewise, xoraphond carriers are among the few prohibited imports as potential sources of the disease. Klaven however, are considered Hegemony slaves (and extremely obedient ones) and the Coteries deem them lawful enough that they tolerate their presence—though much of the citizenry harbors great fear and prejudice towards them and their jagladine masters.

The Coteries of Zel-Argose

The nine most prosperous factions controlling Zel-Argose had their early beginnings as thieves' guilds and street gangs. Lacking the manpower and resources to fully conquer the entire planet, they maintain a tenuous truce primarily focused on defending Argosa from outside interests which might seek to usurp their control. Even as erstwhile allies, however, every Coterie defends its own interests and jealously guards its gates and votes among the Peerage, always looking for new opportunities to gain influence and leverage over one another.

Avaar (Coterie of Light): The holdings of Avaar are bathed in a glowing sourceless illumination, and the upper echelons of the Coterie's membership always carry that light with them wherever they go. While Avaar's minions don't share this proclivity, the higher up in Avaar society an individual ascends, the more they crave the light and disdain the darkness. Despite these obsessive efforts, legends tell of elite Avaars seen in less than perfect illumination, their shadows writhing disconcertingly behind them as they attempt to bring the lighting conditions back to full. Avaar controls two of Zel-Argose's 12 gates as well as several high-end casinos and luxury retreats for the wealthiest off-world clients.

Casticar (The Red Coterie): Casticar holds the most well-traveled gate in Zel-Argose positioned in the middle of its otherwise impregnable citadel. The Red Coterie heavily taxes commerce through the gate—this commerce proves so essential that the only upper limit on the imposed tax is what the other coteries will allow before joining forces and wiping out Casticar leaders. As a result, Casticar holds a majority of the wealth in Zel-Argose and puts most of its resources into

improving the defenses of the Red Citadel in the event such an uprising ever occurs. Based on the foundations of a Patron ruin as old as the gate itself, the Red Citadel is rumored to harbor many secrets in its lower chambers. Beyond their tax income, the Red Coterie also controls much of the organized gambling which takes place in the Battle Pits.

Dorgelf (The Muscle Coterie): A small Coterie controlling a relatively unimportant gate compared to its peers, Dorgelf makes itself useful by providing mercenaries of unimpeachable loyalty to other factions in the city. Dorgelf hirelings have a reputation for superior skill, utmost professionalism, and absolute loyalty—the only exception being that any information they glean while working for their temporary masters secretly flows into the nexus of Dorgelf information brokers. For this reason, other coteries make sure to avoid working with third parties which employ Dorgelf mercenaries, only trusting primarily outward facing business interests which keep their operations far from the inner precincts of Zel-Argose.

Lath-Tom (The Exchange Coterie): Lath-Tom's gate is set near the base of the Skytalon where the airships of Argosa bring produce and goods from across Argosa to its many gates. Countless currencies are used in the interplanetary trade that results from the influx of off-world traders, and Lath-Tom excels in sniffing out the proper exchange rates. While a communal market construct, no single entity can control all moneychanging in the city, but Lath-Tom exerts substantial influence by recruiting and organizing them into a powerhouse guild, then raising rates to control significant elements of the local economy while they skim a percentage off the top for themselves. The Exchange Coterie still has to work out the ideal rates based on supply and demand, but they can temporarily alter the rates and balance sheets to benefit themselves or destroy their competition. Of course, such a trick would only work once against its peers before they united against them, and at permanent detriment to Lath-Tom's prominent position in the city.

Nambrin (The One): Nambrin is an ultra-inclusive coterie which grants membership even at its highest levels to any off-worlders (no matter how alien) willing to invest enough personal assets to climb their ranks and assure the Coterie's continued success. Each member defines their ranking by their overall net-worth as determined each year by the ruling council's accountants. This period also results in a tax of such assets to maintain the Coterie's operations for the coming year. As a result of this practice, Nambrin tends to include a number of significant off-world investors who have bought their way into power, and other Coteries view them with suspicion, always on guard against Hegemony agents and other malign influences attempting to infiltrate the Peerage and the upper echelons of Argosan society. Aside from its two gates and diverse influence on multiple species, Nambrin has no end of off-world funding for its endeavors and proves quite nimble in manipulating local politics to the advantage of its members.

Surrat (The Dagger in the Dark): Surrat is a shadowy coterie controlling their gate through misdirection and intimidation more than force of arms. They provide trained assassins for many enterprises in Zel-Argose and even export such resources across the multiverse for lucrative missions on other worlds. Surrat assassins are well-known for their effectiveness—especially with extortion, intimidation, and untraceable murders—and the Coterie looms large in the calculations and private fears of any aspiring Argosan power-player.

Thanex (The Blood Coterie): The coteries of Zel-Argose each have their own chop, a complicated symbol which they imprint onto documents to prove their provenance. While most coteries use traditional wax seals, Thanex higher-ups have their own disconcerting process which marks their documents with blood. Magical and mundane analyses of the Thanex Mark indicate this blood all comes from the same source, an individual creature whose blood matches no known species. Thanex, led by **Tyreene Thanex** (NE male human soldier), controls two active gates, as well as a now-defunct portal to a famed tomb-world which they closed in a demonstration of power to stymie a Hegemony invasion many years ago. The Blood Coterie also represent most of the administrative labor (and taxation) associated with the slave auctions in the city's Stockyards.

Vervos (Coterie of the Damned): Guarding a gate to a world overrun by the legions of Hell, Vervos deal-makers are synonymous with contract devils ready to extract every ounce of value from any arrangement—including the buying and selling of souls. The coterie's properties are tall and brooding in a monumental style that speaks to an eternity of tyrrany and pain, but also opulence and decadence beyond mortal understanding. To the extent that the summoning arts are tolerated in Zel-Argose, Vervos has a hand in almost all such acts, and Vervosan conjurers keep a close eye on all who break or bend the rules of engaging in deals with extraplanar outsiders and entities from beyond the void.

Zomskane (The Anonymous Coterie): The Zomskane coterie portrays two different faces to the outside world. One face presents the grand compound which guards its lucrative gate and the seat of its considerable political power. But the other champions the downtrodden of Argosa by administering to them in ways which unite and marshal their resources to raise riots, block boulevards, expose or blackmail officials, and contribute to a dense network of spies, informants, errand-runners, and muscle to carry out their wishes. Few such individuals even know the true identity of their masters, as the Coterie's nimble politicians avoid any but the most circumstantial evidence of involvement in the actions they undertake. Though the existence of Zomskane's network is well-known and oft-consulted, it has no open association with the Coterie and secretly applies its efforts to sussing out and crushing rival networks that attempt to leverage Zomskane or the Peerage for their own purposes.

Notable Locations

The Auditor's Spire: This gleaming needle-like tower is an intact remnant from the ancient ruins of Zel-Argose rebuilt many times over the years. Like the gates themselves, the building is nearly impregnable. If not for its lack of a gate, the Coteries themselves would envy it. The spire's central location, however, also makes it an ideal symbol of power for their chosen law-keeper and intermediary, Auditor Jahera Fire-Eyes. Rumors persist of large dungeons underneath the structure, but only the city's most powerful citizens know for sure.

The Battle Pits: This large coliseum features not only a central battle arena, but is ringed by several smaller amphitheaters. On "war day", the main stadium attracts large crowds for the main event, however, for a mere handful of credits, an attendee can observe a smaller match between less known opponents. Wealthy attendees can also purchase an all-day pass and stroll to whatever fight piques their interest. The Battle Pits feature combat between freefolk and slaves. Both may earn prize money, but the latter's winnings go to their masters. The entire operation is managed by **Barrana, Mistress of the Battle Pits** (NE female shobhad soldier).

Commarch's: One of Zel-Argose's most unusual venues, Commarch's is essentially a coffee and tea shop once the rumors and hype are stripped away. While innumerable bars and disreputable dives exist to strike shady and nefarious deals in Zel-Argose, only Commarch's reliably enforces neutrality within its walls. Here, die-hard Hegemony and Accord representatives can actually meet and converse under the watchful eyes of its mercane proprietor, his discreet guards, and various technologies recovered from a nearby Patron ruin.

The Bestiarium: Many Argosan factions place restrictions on unusual creatures and livestock imported through the gates, citing ecological concerns and potential bio-hazards. At the Bestiarium, however, any number of exotic animals, mounts, and livestock appear for sale with a posted sign from the Office of the Auditor plainly stating the city holds no liability for unmanageable purchases, and that the current owner of any animal must take responsibility for its care and actions.

Chapel of the Blue Radiance: Zel-Argose has many chapels but few true temples. Despite its modest name, this mid-sized religious stronghold has sustained itself on tithes and offerings in both good times and bad. Its primary clergy eschews any overt spirituality, serving instead as the residence and ministry of **The Azure Syndic** (NG female yllosan mystic), an incorporeal yllosan which manifests a physical presence whenever trouble comes to her sanctuary, while other clergy administer to the chapel's adherents. Although the priests promote a benevolent message and offer food and sanctuary to the city's impoverished children and homeless refugees from other worlds, many distrust their mysterious motives and inscrutable deity, Kytheklo.

The Juggler's Guild: This guild of jugglers, street magicians, and other performers has their meeting hall here under the watchful eyes of **Zim-Zim, Chief Instigator of the Juggler's Guild** (CN female catfolk operative). The guild's dues grant members a place to practice their skills, access a job board for possible performance opportunities, and share their concerns. Secretly, it also serves as a front for a thieves' guild which lives in the shadow of the Coteries and preys upon their operations. Beneath the hall, a warren of underground passages and tunnels run the length of the city, many also providing access to unexplored ruins of the Patrons.

Morpheum Street: This causeway in the Artisan's Quarter caters to upscale iniquity and exotic services, including drug dens which offer a unique escape through transcendental experiences and magical tattoo artists whose ink animates in unusual and arcane ways. Most of the garishly decorated two-story buildings act as a residence and place of business, including a local brothel and boarding house whose prostitutes engage in tantric rituals that unlock past life recursions. Morpheum Street also hosts one of the city's few reliable exorcist guilds, as well as a psychic detective agency.

The River Zeph: This deep river originates from a spring atop nearby Mount Hyram. At its peak, the mountain remains above the snowline and captures moisture in the otherwise arid terrain. The natural spring combines with seasonal runoff, feeding the Zeph River which bisects the city. An underground plumbing system, perhaps Zel-Argose's greatest native technological achievement, diverts water to various public cisterns in every quarter. The river eventually flows into Toil Town and diverts into man-made irrigation ditches thereafter which snake out from the city for miles. These ditches provide the much-needed water to grow crops in Argosa's dry, but otherwise fertile fields.

Skytalon: This structure was once a massive archway towering over the city during the height of the Patrons' influence on Argosa. Sundered during the war with Principalities, it derives its name from its appearance as a massive animal talon jabbing at the sky. In the centuries since then, the weaker half of the monument was pulled down when smiths learned to cut its strange black metal and repurpose it in smelting forges. The other half of the arch retains its structural integrity and contains a working elevator powered by an unknown energy source. It now serves as a landing pad and mooring point for zeppelins and smaller airships which venture further into the hinterlands, carrying passengers, delivering freight, and collecting goods for off-world trade.

The Stockyards: Although the Coteries themselves do not traffic wholesale in slavery, Zel-Argose has no law against it, and many of them benefit by taxing such transactions. The Stockyards provide the city's slave market. Shaded pens of wrought iron are rented (or licensed for up to a full year) to slavers, situated around numerous public auction blocks. On a busy day, three to four auctions might take place—two

in the morning, and one or two more in the evening. It's a buyer's market when they accidentally occur simultaneously, as canny buyers may haggle with auctioneers between two different offerings.

Toiler's Square: Despite its uncharitable name, this massive open-air market is where free farmers, fishermen, and tradesmen ply their goods in Zel-Argose. The "toilers" as the Coteries derisively refer to them are heavily watched here by the Auditor's enforcers, as arguments and fights run counter-productive to fostering active trade in the city. Ironically, their presence encourages most vendors to police themselves, augmenting their stalls with mercenaries for added security.

A Primer on Gates

The many gates created by the Patrons and the Principalities present a complex network referred to on most worlds as "The Weave." The gates often connect to the next closest gate, but countless factors come into play when the entire network is examined. Planetary rotation, gravity wells, and other cosmological and even magical forces govern where, when, and how far the gates can open. For example, some may only function under specific conditions, such as an eclipse or certain planetary alignments. And others may require certain keys, knowledge, or intrinsic qualities in those attempting to access them.

Gates vary in functionality and external appearance, but adhere to some common elements. They universally accommodate a creature of Large size or smaller, though some are considerably larger giving rise to rumors of titans striding between worlds. They're almost always found where humanoid creatures dwell, either in the present or the ancient past. The Patrons and the Principalities created various species with a basic humanoid design in mind, believing it to be the perfect form for interacting with the unique environments of the multiverse. Gates may have singular or multiple connection points, although many are also fixed and unchanging. The actual entrance to a gate is always circular, whether perfectly round or oval or partially buried as an arc. All apparently operate in sync with the orbit of their homeworld around its given star, tapping into the gravity wells of this relationship to power and extend its reach to other solar systems and galaxies. Each gate is a minor artifact and physically indestructible—with one caveat. They *can* be rendered inoperable, but the method required to sabotage a gate is a closely guarded secret within the Bellianic Accord—the biological descendants of the ancient Patrons. Once sabotaged, a gate is rendered inoperable even if it remains indestructible, making them a precious resource to all who use them.

Beyond those basic qualities, gates vary greatly in function and outward appearance. A vertical upright metal ring is a common configuration, but numerous other gates have been found created from stone and set into ground. Some permit two-way traffic, while others are strictly one-way. Some gates are consistent and reliable, while others prove temperamental and fail from time to time. A few even require certain conditions to be met before they can open, such as a full moon, an eclipse, or a clear night to better read the heavens. A temperamental gate is often "ignited" with some form of intense energy to better stabilize it. Select gates even alter those who pass through them to acclimatize them to their destination. Stories also circulate that certain "chosen" individuals manifest amazing abilities upon arrival on other worlds, a morphic manifestation which changes each and every time they pass through a gate.

The placement of gates often defy reason, but the time since their creation spans thousands of years and no extant species fully understands the secrets of their manufacture or the mystery behind their operation. Elder races realize there may once have been a context to their arrangement which no longer exists or became altered due to planetary upheaval, orbital changes, or the rise and fall of various civilizations tasked with maintaining them. As a result, the Gateway City of Zel-Argose is a mystery unto itself, and the many portals among its ruins may lead to more Patron enclaves where answers can be found and then applied to reaching even more worlds among the Weave of the multiverse.

The Vendel Solar System

Home to Argosa, the Vendel system is a binary system boasting a handful of other planets and oddities orbiting one or both of its stars. The unique combination of a yellow main-sequence star and pulsar, and Argosa's figure eight orbit around and between them, may be the primary reason Argosa is blessed with such a concentration of gates.

Becedar: An ordinary yellow star in all respects, Becedar is seen by Argosa's inhabitants as a benevolent protector, keeping them safe against the treachery and chaos of its highly radioactive partner—the binary pulsar Palomb. The name Becedar means "The Witness" or "The Learner" and the star has often served as the chief god of earlier civilizations in the Vendel system. Certainly the ancient ruins associated with the Patrons viewed Becedar as the more benign of their two suns, a purveyor of warmth and fertility.

Palomb: Palomb is by far the smaller of the two stars in the Vendel system, a gravitationally powerful pulsar which tore into the orbital range of Becedar many eons ago, shredding the orderly and ordinary star system and replacing it with something far more unique. Bits and pieces of ancient lore describe Palomb as "The Interloper" or "The Intruder," blaming the pulsar for tricking Becedar into sharing the system with it, and creating planetary cataclysms and near-extinction events in the process. Palomb often serves as an ill omen identified with trouble and misfortune, and the Argosan seasons affected by Palomb are characterized by cold and violent storms, contributing to its grim reputation.

Argosa: Argosa and its three moons orbit Becedar and Palomb in a figure eight orbit. The planet is protected from the harshest rays of Palomb by a dense upper atmosphere full of heavy elements and rare gases, as well as an orbit which avoids the pulsar's highest radiation. The unusual orbit and high levels of gravitational and cosmic energy unleashed on Argosa help explain the presence of so many gates on its surface, but scholars have never fully identified the link. Most of the sunlight which energizes Argosa's biosphere comes from Becedar, with Palomb contributing mostly harmful, high-energy rays deflected by Argosa's upper atmosphere. Thus the planet's long orbit around its twin stars includes long and varied summers as it orbits Becedar, followed by a diverse set of winters as it orbits Palomb. Argosa's weather is generally warm and calm during the long summer, but cold and stormy during the long winter, kept alive only by the weak radiance of Becedar from across the system, as the sheer energy pumping from Palomb contributes more light and turbulence than heat.

Styp: The largest of Argosa's moons, Styp is verdant and oblong, occupying a strange orbit 15 degrees off the planet's poles. The moon has a thick atmosphere that belches from the planet's hot springs, supporting lush thriving jungles full of hardy flora and fauna simple enough to survive Palomb's constant bombardment. Lacking Argosa's atmospheric protection, creatures that visit Styp for any length of time must bring protective suits or other means of shielding themselves from the pulsar's hostile rays.

Oppa: The smallest of Argosa's moons, Oppa is a small globe of gas surrounding a tiny metallic core that must be very dense indeed to hold the atmosphere together. The swirling orange and peach of the "surface" hides the core from all but the most rudimentary inspection. No life or any features of note can be discerned on Oppa, though anything could be lurking out of sight below the surface.

Hepa: Once a planet in its own right, bright-blue Hepa was captured by Argosa when Palomb hurtled into the system. Intelligent life thrives on Hepa, uniquely capable of withstanding the intense solar radiation of Palomb, but that life proves xenophobic and warlike, breathing an atmosphere entirely incompatible with most non-native species. So, most Argosans know very little about their neighboring moon and none of its planetary gates seem to reach it.

Xylla: Xylla closely orbits Palomb, enduring a deluge of x-rays making it difficult to study or explore. The planet's proximity to the pulsar has caused it to form into a diamond-like mass and it is unlikely anything but elementals or shielded constructs survive there. Certainly the crushing gravity, deadly radiation, and lack of a breathable atmosphere have kept Argosan explorers from paying a visit despite the discovery of an active gate in the hinterlands capable of reaching it.

Chrong: Chrong follows a distant elliptical orbit around Becedar, 40 degrees off the ecliptic and never nearing Argosa or its sister planets. Before the advent of Palomb, the thermally active planet harbored intelligent life, but according to the cryptic records left by the Patrons, only ruins now remain. Argosan astronomers have deduced the existence of life on the planet to this day, presumably warmed by geothermal sources, but no one knows what form that life could take so far from the light of Becedar.

Revan: Appearing in Argosa's skies once every 10 orbital cycles, Revan is a gargantuan comet whose unpredictable course frequently brings it through the system into dangerous proximity to the other bodies orbiting the binary stars. Every time it nears one of the planets, however, some property of the gravitational forces involved keeps a collision from taking place. These near collisions keep the comet's orbit unstable, and its strange cycles have significant effects on the functioning, smooth or otherwise, of Argosa's gates.

The Haze: Other planets destroyed by Palomb's arrival have combined with exotic matter from the pulsar to create a shimmering shell of dust ringing the Vendel system. Visible on the ecliptic plane, this colorful band makes navigation easier and has long served Argosa's popluation as a primitive star calendar. The haze unpredictably shifts its colors at times, and many astrological traditions have grown up around their association with the moons and seasons. Astronomers have also noted other large bodies amid the dust of the haze, presumably larger chunks of asteroids and dead planets suspended at the edge of the system.

PLANETARY PANTHEONS

by Sean K. Reynolds

Countless worlds drift among the stars of the multiverse, some barren and ancient, while others are newly-formed and teeming with life. Powerful beings strive to influence them, raising up civilizations as patron sponsors or tearing them down as hateful destroyers. Others maintain their distance, partaking in the interplanetary tug-of-war only as neutral observers, extending their power to safeguard ancient mysteries best kept from those who would abuse them. These entities arise from many places—some ascending from humble origins, establishing their legend as mortal champions before taking up a greater cause across multiple worlds, and others existing since the beginning of time, working to shape and nurture the birth of new species while literally playing god in a sandbox of limitless stars. And still more seek to wrest such toys from the hands of their rivals, creating strife which manifests in enormous world-ending cataclysms or interplanetary warfare.

As the deities of the Legendary Worlds Campaign Setting make their presence felt in the lives of their followers and petitioners, they have the potential to shape the destinies of entire civilizations and species, capitalizing upon such resources for good or ill in carrying out their designs on the multiverse. Bestowing divine power or favor on their greatest champions, they set in motion all new conflicts and changes across the passage of time. When necessary (or possible), they may even walk among the devoted, both to test their faith and guide it. Regardless, these beings hold a higher understanding of the multiverse than the mortals which live in it, and they deal with one another on a grander scale and stage than most will ever know.

Interplanetary Faiths

Different civilizations hold to a wide array of ideals and religious beliefs across the many planets of the multiverse, and where the demands of new worlds and environments diverge from one another, their faith soon follows. The next few pages detail the faiths of the 20 core deities with the most direct influence on the Legendary Worlds Campaign Setting. While they represent the most common gods to impact multiple worlds, GMs should feel free to incorporate divine beings from other campaign settings which also have designs on other planets or stars. Some deities may also limit their attention to a single world and its inhabitants, simply awaiting discovery by off-world travelers before extending their faith through interstellar gateways to new planets, while others have followers who spread their faith from world to world. Regardless, all the gods presented here follow the same general format, defining a general portfolio of concerns, the deity's alignment, and in some cases, its racial origin. A brief description of each god is then provided with additional insights into the activities of their followers, temples life, formal garb, holy texts, and beliefs.

Alrenjae

Goddess of cleverness, exploration, kinship, survival

Alignment: CG

Racial Origin: Jaskirri

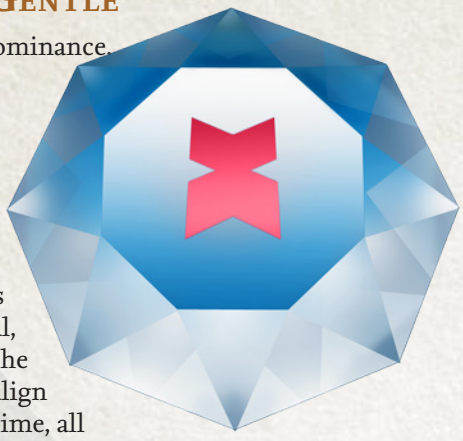
Alrenjae is brilliant, curious, and loyal. Having helped the jaskirri overcome deadly oppressive threats on their prior homeworld, she focuses now on making sure they survive as they spread to other planets. Beautiful and affectionate, she fiercely defends her worshipers, willing to suffer great injuries in order to protect them from harm. She also strives to learn more about the multiverse and use what she learns to protect and empower those who revere her. She remains cautious, but intrigued, by new things, devouring information and using it to probe and fortify her arguments and beliefs.

Alrenjae's worshipers study history and social behavior, dabbling in many areas of knowledge before finding one that appeals to them. They learn the ins and outs of local politics to serve as diplomats and scholars, using their sharp wits like steel to cut through ignorance and opposing arguments. A few prefer studying the natural world, and work as guides and researchers in strange ecologies or by charting new planets for future explorers.

Her temples are small, private sanctuaries (closed to those outside the faith), decorated in soft purple colors. Formal clothing is blue pants that do not restrict movement and a waist-length purple or maroon tunic. Her holy text is called *Life's Illusions*, and teaches how to understand the connections between all people, all things, and all lifetimes.

Alrenjae shows her favor to mortals with the sensation of a comforting gentle touch on the arm, the feeling of fingers running through the hair, or a fiery sensation in the belly that drives away fear and pain. Other signs include a powerful sense of self-awareness or recognizing a powerful, useful analogy in an argument.

Cyshrn the Gentle



Goddess of dominance, persuasion, psionics

Alignment: NE

Racial Origin: Ultari

Cyshrn is a mediator, a peacekeeper, and a diplomat whose honeyed words hide the surgical, psionic precision she uses to cut and realign reluctant minds. In time, all creatures shall see things the way she wants, whether they do so willingly or as coerced through pain and mental onslaught. Her divine messengers are former demigods stripped of their power and independence, now puppets to her will as they joyously praise her name and relay her commands to the mortal world.

Cyshrns's worshipers are the subtle speakers whose velvet voices conceal dangerous steel. They are the schemers, the manipulators, and the power behind thrones, subtly altering allegiances with propaganda and psionics, and taking great pride in using the minimal amount of effort to achieve the greatest effect. Their appointed goal is to conquer and dominate the known multiverse, thereby enabling Cyshrn's triumphant return.

Her temples are places which put visitors at ease with subdued lighting, muted colors, and quiet music. Priests wear gray or neutral colors to avoid any contrast with their local temple's decorations, often in the style of diplomats or ambassadors, but sometimes with diamonds or clear crystals as accents and enhancements for their divine power. The goddess's holy book is called *Serenade the Mind*, and discusses her religious doctrine as well as ways to analyze and manipulate various races.

Cyshrn shows favor to mortals by unlocking or refreshing their psionic powers, offering moments of great clarity into the motivations of a rival or enemy, and extending the duration or effect of mental control. For non-psionic worshipers, she plants in their mouths the perfect words to say in difficult negotiations or to make listeners more gullible.

Dakorian Rooth

Deity of crafting, mutation, science, technology

Alignment: LE

Racial Origin: Jagladine

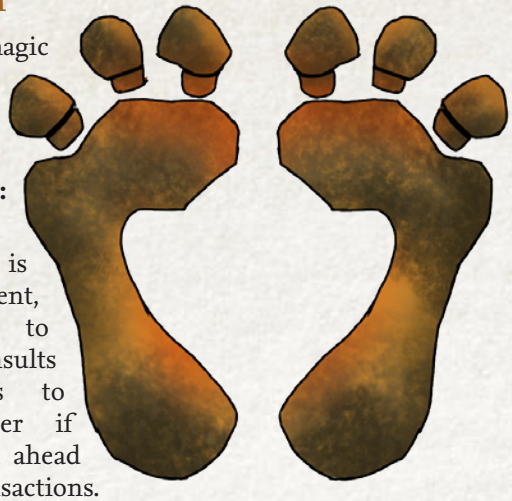
Dakorian Rooth is a mastermind of alchemy, biology, and engineering, capable of reproducing magical effects with pure science. Long ago, Dakorian experimented on itself to exceed its own physical limitations, now existing beyond flesh, beyond gender, and beyond mortality. Dakorian always seeks new life, lore, and technology to inspire and incorporate into its work, whether harvesting chemicals and organs from various creatures or applying bizarre energies to its latest inventions. Ever a perfectionist, Dakorian is never content with such work, always revising its inventions years or even decades later.

Dakorian's worshipers alter, combine, and dissect life and technology to create new outcomes. The church offers financial incentives for breakthroughs in various fields of study, which the faithful use to further independent research. Lacking sufficient resources, many of the clergy experiment on themselves, performing exploratory surgeries or dosing themselves with rare toxins and mutagens in hope of an unexpected result.

Temples operate like a hospital, laboratory, and slave pen, with priests sleeping in empty prison cells. Dakorian established a clear chain of command among its priesthood, although each individual receives time for independent research. Formal garb is a utilitarian shirt-cloak and belt with many pockets for holding devices, vials, and notes. The holy text is *Power to Change*, but each branch has its own variation with basic and intermediate information about different fields of knowledge.

Dakorian rarely intervenes in the mortal world, but sometimes creates a fortuitous "accident" which soon catalyzes a new discovery or mutates a worshiper in a minor way to facilitate their research. Among the jagladine, they believe Dakorian built a biological imperative into each of them to always aim for what-could-be rather than what-is.

Eronenem



Goddess of magic and trade

Alignment: LN

Racial Origin: Unknown

Eronenem is eloquent, patient, and willing to forgive insults and attempts to undermine her if she comes out ahead in her transactions. Her ability to remain stoic in the face of rage, flattery, or extortion is legendary, her thoughts hidden behind a placid expression and confusing, asymmetrical eyes. She loves bargaining and negotiation, the art of the deal, and extracting the highest value from any exchange. This also reflects her taste in magic, especially for conjuration and enchantment spells which can entice or influence others. She welcomes prayers from, and provides spells to, any sentient being who chooses her as their patron, seeing this as another way of brokering one resource for another. She thinks poorly of games of chance, as they rely more on luck rather than skill.

Followers of Eronenem are usually merchants looking for advantages in buying and selling, or arcane spellcasters seeking insight into how magic can influence minds, elements, and war. She encourages any tactic which advances profit or the utility of magic, including creating monopolies or destroying goods to inflate prices by creating artificial scarcity.

Temples of Eronenem are quiet, nondescript buildings with many small side chambers that allow for private discussion or study. Formal clothing is a tabard adorned with gems and metal tokens representing the wearer's significant accomplishments; most followers wear thin rings of copper, silver, and gold on multiple fingers. Her holy text is *Unshackled Marketplace*, which mixes aphorisms and advice on doublespeak, fine print in contracts, embargoes, and other underhanded tactics.

The goddess doesn't believe in "tipping her hand" by giving mortals something for nothing. Her intervention only occurs upon a success, not merely being on a favorable path.

Gar-Peru

God of crafting, loyalty, perseverance

Alignment: LG

Racial Origin: Divymm

Gar-Peru appears to be a divine entity requiring the consciousness of the divymm race to function. He vanished for a time during the Great Departure when all surviving divymm became inactive, but then reappeared when the Accord reawakened them. All divymm, as worshipers or not, are connected to him, united as if Gar-Peru were a paragon of their race. He can create more of his kind, alter them, or manufacture devices out of his own substance at will, and grows anxious if prevented from doing so, as if kept from his primary purpose. Oddly, Gar-Peru remains unconcerned with how he or the divymm were created, stoically encouraging other beings to accept their fated purpose in life, even if that means they remain a tiny cog in a larger machine.

Gar-Peru's followers (no matter what race) are driven to build and create, whether that means weapons and armor for soldiers, tools for developing civilizations, or earthworks and fortifications for settlements. They have a strong sense of duty, respect fair authority, and endure hardship (but not cruelty) to promote the greater good.

Temples function as a blacksmith shop or foundry where items are crafted as an act of worship. Because his followers come in many shapes and sizes, they have no standardized formal clothing, although bands of linked stone or metal bearing his holy symbol are common adornments used in sashes, belts, or necklaces. His holy text is *Timeless Patience*, which includes songs and incantations to pass the time when performing tedious tasks.

Gar-Peru shows favor to mortals by relieving fatigue and exhaustion, repairing broken tools, creating exceptional goods out of mediocre materials, and noticing critical structural flaws at the right moment.

Haymot Steel-Arm

Goddess of metal, transformation

Alignment: LN

Racial Origin: Auttaine

According to legends, Haymot is the union of two souls: the first auttaine child born of a human woman, and that child's own mother, fused—after their heroic mortal lives ended—into a divine entity greater than the sum of its parts. She is the champion and guide of the auttaine, and can create or hide any clockwork parts she needs upon her own body, thereby representing all her people regardless of their augmentations. She encourages others to reinvent or better themselves as needed, making progress toward a perfect form (called the "eidos") which varies from individual to individual. This is usually a physical transformation, but may include an intellectual or spiritual change as well.

Followers of Haymot spend time each day trying to identify or achieve their eidos, whether through meditation, exercise, surgery, or enhancing their clockwork components. Some see their eidos as achieving a perfect style with a weapon or tool, and use this time practicing a professional craft or martial technique. Temples serve as blacksmithies, clockworkshops, and hospitals, with specialized wings extending outward from a central hub. Formal clothing is a rich brown, fitted garment (often soft leather) cut to purposefully reveal the wearer's clockwork enhancements. Her holy text is *Reaching For the Eidos*, which also explains basic surgical procedures and techniques for clockwork alteration, implantation, and removal.

Haymot shows favor to mortals by giving skin the hardness of steel, granting a vision of the next step toward one's eidos, repairing or accelerating a clockwork implant, or transforming an improvised weapon or tool into a fully-functional one. She may even instantaneously create new clockwork parts on any person, although this almost never happens for non-auttaine, and always proves temporary.

Idniskow

Goddess of adaptability, air, earth, fire, survival, water

Alignment: N

Racial Origin: Loran

Idniskow teaches that life always finds a way to continue, even in extreme environments. Even a "dead" world ravaged by plague or magical disaster still contains life too small for the eye to see, and, given enough time that life will grow, thrive, repopulate, and eventually change into something different. She's been known to leave especially hardy, simple creatures (such as fungi and lichen) on barren worlds and large asteroids, returning thousands of years later to view with delight what has become of them.

The followers of Idniskow are driven to colonize and terraform new worlds to make them more hospitable for life. Not necessarily explorers, they usually arrive soon after a new world becomes common knowledge. If an enemy currently controls or lays siege to such a place, her people volunteer to use their physical gifts as a means of leveraging a fast victory or to lend quick aid to its defenders.

Temples are usually round and made of stone or other local durable materials, and used as community shelters and meeting halls. Four alcoves always represent the material elements of air, earth, fire, and water, but a central pedestal also symbolizes adaptation. Formal clothing is very simple—a loose robe decorated with the goddess' holy symbol on the chest or stomach—as the faithful place more interest in nurturing living things than abstract rituals. Her holy text is *The Element of Change*, and gives advice on surviving dangerous weather and strange environments.

Idniskow shows her divine favor by shielding a person from dangerous effects, especially if they are protecting other living things, and manifests this protection as a tattoo-like wheel of her symbol on the person's skin.

Kytheklo

God of deception, light, psionics

Alignment: CG

Racial Origin: Yllosan

Kytheklo resembles the distracting glimmer at the corner of one's eye and the seed of doubt vexing a tyrant's mind. His influence proves subtle but long-reaching, like the falling pebble which triggers an avalanche that buries an enemy camp. His power has dwindled since the decline of the yllosan, but he actively recruits followers from other races to extend his presence in the multiverse, granting power only to the strongest and most determined who carry out his plans.

The god's followers form close-knit communities, supporting each other regardless of race or homeworld. They also safeguard younger civilizations, assisting and guiding their emergence or travel to new worlds. His faithful manipulate and misdirect the less scrupulous, especially those descended from the ancient Principalities like the Hegemony, carefully measuring their words and deeds to avoid risking themselves or their god's larger plan, while still using supernatural means to conceal and carry out his work.

Most temples of Kytheklo are discovered rather than built, usually including several large crystals to enhance psionics and make it easier for yllosan to communicate with corporeal beings. Such temples usually reside in caves or simple structures built around standing stones. Non-yllosan worshipers wear layers of gauzy white cloth and clear, crystal jewelry that catches the light. His holy text is *The Presence of One*, which yllosan record on tiny, psionic crystals.

Kytheklo shows favor to mortals through encouraging words whispered so quietly they're easily mistaken for the imagination. Often, these messages can only be understood at exactly the right time, or require a priest's interpretation for further clarity. Rarely, Kytheklo sends an immaterial projection of his angelic form, usually when there's no time for such subtlety.

Lianthus

Goddess of nature, plants, symbiosis

Alignment: NG

Racial Origin: Chlorvian

Lianthus represents chlorvian society, nurturing plants, positive relationships, and finding the proper balance between nature and civilization so both can thrive. She's the bounty of the wilds, the reward for tending crops, the nurtured friendship with a wallflower, and the very bond between a chlorvian and its chlorva. She embraces compassion and realism, understanding that some things must die so others can live, seeing the cycle from seed to plant to flower as a metaphor for all eternity. Though she focuses on plants more than animals, she understands their interdependency and encourages deeper understandings of ecology rather than ignorant attempts to eliminate predators or pests.

Followers of Lianthus respect nature and all its blessings, directly tending useful plants and relying on them for commerce and survival. Stories of other worlds attract their interest as they seek new plants and seeds to distribute, hoping to crossbreed them to create stronger, hardier foods and textiles.

Most of her temples include large, natural areas, while others are woven shelters made of vines and fallen branches, insulated with soil, and then topped with grass or moss to create a thriving ecosystem. Formal clothing is a knee-length robe or tunic in earthtones, sometimes embroidered or knitted with spring or autumn colors on the neckline and sleeves. Her holy book is *Wisdom of the Green*, which doubles as a catalog of useful medicinal and food-bearing plants.

Lianthus shows favor by causing plants to help in minor ways, such as a tree limb intercepting a fall or long grass tripping a pursuer. To a chlorvian, she might strengthen their bark-like skin, change the seasonal color of their hair, or manifest an unusual bloom along their path.

Lurn Shadowhand

God of murder, night, terror

Alignment: CE

Racial Origin: Unknown

It is said that Lurn was discovered drifting between worlds, a blurry, giant corpse, and those who found him were absorbed into his dark essence, leaving only one survivor as his first priest tasked with spreading his teachings to other mortals. Lurn is the fear of shadows, the quiet terror on long voyages through the great darkness, and the evil deed hidden by night's embrace. He claims all souls killed in his name, and even the followers of other gods wonder if this is merely a boast or actual fact. He cares not for glory in battle or honorable combat, just the act of killing and the horror that every victim feels the moment an unexpected blade strikes a vital organ and they recognize the moment of their death.

Lurn's followers are murderers, thieves, assassins, stalkers, those who enjoy sowing fear by hunting in the night. His cult includes an unusually large number of vampires, and many groups are led by vampire cultists or another night-dependent undead.

Lurn's temples always exist as hidden chambers behind false walls in otherwise normal-appearing buildings. Black candles provide illumination, either in wall niches or small skull-shaped holders with red lenses in their eye sockets. Formal clothing is a complete set of flat black garments and either a red monocle, red goggles, pince-nez, or spectacles. His holy book is *Fear and Souls for the Shadowhand*, a remarkably direct set of parables and propaganda to inspire the faithful.

Lurn shows favor to mortals by guiding their weapons to places that silently incapacitate a victim, snuffing lights to prevent detection, enhancing vision in dim light and darkness, and causing opponents to flee into deadly harm.

Maculatu the Sly

God of stealth, survival, trickery

Alignment: CN

Racial Origin: Zvarr

According to the zvarr, Maculatu was once a very ambitious mortal who committed the perfect crime—he stole another god's divinity, assuming their role as the lord of stealth—after which he spent several years escaping attempts to reclaim that power. Now firmly entrenched in his divine status, Maculatu watches over the zvarr and other sneaky folk, helping them hide from enemies and survive ridiculous odds. Prone to greed and taking things which don't belong to him, he still respects a fair bargain and keeps his word when it comes to contracts and negotiations.

Followers of Maculatu are typically thieves, sneaks, spies, smugglers, gossips, eavesdroppers, and similar folk who rely on stealth and misdirection. As a god of survival, he also serves as a patron to those praying in foxholes, gamblers hoping for long shots, refugees looking to evade turmoil or capture, and anyone who lives through terrible danger by the skin of their teeth.

Maculatu's temples are usually tall buildings with small interior spaces, walls that are easy to climb, and concealed exits on upper floors, allowing the faithful to escape through an upper window to a nearby roof. Formal clothing is a snug but non-restrictive dark shirt with many pockets that can hold small tools and emergency supplies, as if the priests expect to have to flee for their lives at any moment. His holy text is *Never Be Seen*, which also has tips for sneaking across noisy floors and how to live on just bugs and rainwater.

Maculatu shows divine favor to mortals by darkening their flesh, blurring their outlines to make them harder to see, softening falls, presenting easy stealing opportunities, or negating hunger and thirst.

Niloticus the Explorer

Goddess of ambition, colonization, conquest, pride

Alignment: NE

Racial Origin: Zor'ess

Niloticus craves territory, power, and acclaim. She wants the zor'ess to carry her faith to better worlds, populate them with many offspring, and live in decadence.

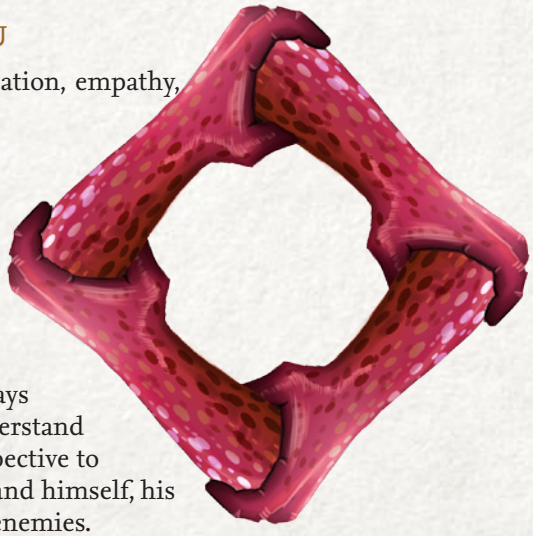
Never satisfied with what she has, she believes destiny has prepared her for greater things because she's the most beautiful, fierce, and intelligent of her kind. Niloticus uses her presence and physicality to seduce or dominate potential rivals for the sake of proving her superiority.

Followers of Niloticus strive to be the best at whatever they do, whether in politics, battle, charm, or crafting. They admire those with superior talents, hoping to someday earning similar renown while showing off their skills to inspire lesser creatures to try harder. Her most ardent worshipers include explorers who find (and conquer) undiscovered tribes, despots whose subjects display the perfect mix of fear and awe, and individuals whose rags-to-riches adventures prove breeding and station are secondary to determination and ambition.

Her temples have triangular chambers for worship, always including a large statue of her with all architectural features directing the eye towards that point so the goddess remains the center of attention. Formal clothing is a fine-quality, green shirt with elbow-length sleeves, and a flat metal holy symbol the size of a dinner plate worn over the heart. Her holy text is *Gripping Destiny*, containing many platitudes about believing in an idea so strongly that the multiverse must comply to make it true.

Niloticus shows favor by indicating the correct path with a green outline or mark in the shape of a zor'ess eye, causing rivals to stumble or commit gaffes in view of others, and enhancing strength or physical appearance to overcome obstacles.

Nimsharu



God of art, creation, empathy, multiplicity

Alignment: N

Racial Origin: Tretharri

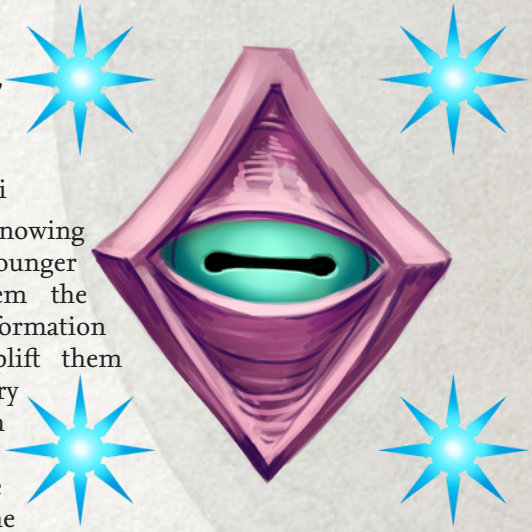
Nimsharu bears an enigmatic, patient, wise demeanor, always seeking to understand another's perspective to better understand himself, his allies, and his enemies. He steadfastly examines every solution to a problem before settling on a final course of action, but also refuses to entertain opinions which only lead to ignorance and stagnation. This makes him an excellent mediator for arguments between divinities, but also means he's more likely to introduce additional viewpoints before working toward a final solution. He holds this approach in all pursuits, whether in art, philosophy, or warfare, frequently using different gestures, tools, or weapons in all four hands in a bewildering dance to explore all possibilities at an incredible pace.

His followers embrace his philosophy of balancing multiple perspectives. A diplomat might alternate between soothing words and gentle threats, a warrior might shoot a bow at one opponent and bludgeon another with a mace, or an artist might create a portrait in charcoal while highlighting the background with oils. They confront stereotypes, question their own beliefs, and challenge others' assumptions on a regular basis.

Temples are square or rectangular, with arched doorways and multiple side rooms for crafting, meditation, and training. Formal clothing is a light gray vest and calf-length pants, often decorated with embroidery or badges representing the many activities the wearer studies or has mastered. Nimsharu's holy text is *The Fourth Hand Speaks*, a deeply philosophical book that discusses alternative views without having to accept that they have equal validity.

Nimsharu shows favor through sudden epiphanies about another's position, bursts of empathy that explain others' motivation and goals, episodes of near-manic creativity, and the ability to perform multiple difficult actions at the same time.

Olalis



God of knowledge, precognition, will

Alignment: NG

Racial Origin: Elali

Olalis is an all-knowing shepherd of younger races, giving them the tools and information they need to uplift them into interplanetary politics and arm them for the conflict against the descendants of the Principalities. He is an ancient entity and a master player in the long game, never showing his strategy until the last possible moment. Even his most ardent supporters wonder if they are merely pawns in a grander scheme, but trust in Olalis's dedication to benevolence and good will. He's been more active in recent decades, as if sensing the Patrons' conflict—or his role in it—will soon come to an end, and he wants to make sure good wins over evil, even if it comes at great cost.

Followers of Olalis look for patterns and signs that indicate fortuitous people and circumstances can be brought together for a greater effect in the cause of the Patrons. They

are studious, trained to recognize untapped potential, and determined to succeed at their goals.

Temples of Olalis are much like libraries, with history books on various races and planets available to all members of the faith. Mirrors and ornamental windows are common decorations, many of which are set in eye-like frames, and some even proving suitable for use as scrying devices. Ceremonial robes are pale lavender with starburst clasps at the neck and wrists. His holy text is *The Silver Path*, which includes prophecies about the discovery and role of several younger races—some yet to be discovered.

Olalis shows divine favor to mortals by giving glimpses of likely future outcomes, fostering courage in the frightened, providing moments of clarity during mental duress, and inspiring timely solutions to unusually threatening problems.

Qarn the Twice-Eternal

Deity of life, death, undeath

Alignment: N

Racial Origin: Unknown [Mythic being who can grant spells]

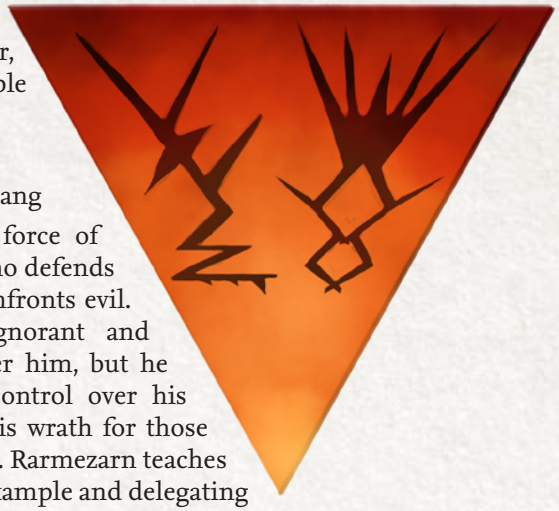
Qarn is a mysterious, genderless being embodying both positive and negative energy, as well as the fine line in between. Its faith arose on a harsh world where a group of colonists were left to starve. Some embraced undeath, acting as guardians, laborers, and mentors so the others could breed and survive. Over generations, this culture created a stable dynamic where people live, die, and become undead to continue contributing to their community. Qarn represents the balance between the needs of the living, the dead, and the undead—and that the latter can peacefully coexist among the living.

Followers of Qarn are advocates for peaceful interaction between living and undead communities. They mediate disputes among civilized, living creatures as well as intelligent undead, while collecting and conscripting mindless undead for cheap labor and dispatching any such creatures who refuse to abide by treaties. They also defend harmless undead and dhampirs against angry mobs and overzealous hunters.

Qarn's temples are squat, sturdy buildings which can survive extreme weather, always including places where individuals or families can retreat, and a crypt or tomb underneath for allied undead to live within (which usually includes secret escape tunnels for temple residents to use in an emergency). Formal clothing is dark gray robes with a black stripe and white stripe running horizontally from shoulder to shoulder. Its holy text is *The Winding Gray Path*, which also serves as a lexicon on various types of undead.

Qarn shows divine favor by turning aside fatal attacks, making hostile enemies lethargic and indifferent, or even spontaneously raising a slain person as a free-willed undead in order to complete one last task.

Rarmezarn



God of armor, honor, honorable combat, strength

Alignment: LG

Racial Origin: Krang

Rarmezarn is a force of righteousness who defends the weak and confronts evil. The willfully ignorant and complacent anger him, but he keeps an iron control over his temper, saving his wrath for those who harm others. Rarmezarn teaches that leading by example and delegating authority to those who are capable—whether they realize it or not—can empower a person to do great things. He dislikes underhanded dealings, those who exploit oaths and codes of honor, and those who prey on the weak. It is said he can summon or dismiss his armor and weapons with a thought.

Rarmezarn's followers are knights, crusaders, vigilant champions, guards, and soldiers serving a good cause. They remain cautious about swearing oaths but strive to uphold them if they do. It is common practice for worshipers to grow long beards and tie metal rings into them for every honorable oath sworn, every honorable duel won, and every honorable act recognized. Beardless members of the faith usually grow out a lock of hair or braid a leather cord for a similar purpose.

Temples of Rarmezarn are squat, defensible buildings with wide double doors, thick interior walls, and spare armor and weapons. Formal clothing is ceremonial or functional armor covered with a brown, black, or red tabard bearing the god's symbol. His holy text is *Deep Breath, Iron Hand*, which explains measured responses to martial, mental, and spiritual threats.

Rarmezarn shows favor to mortals by enhancing their strength, moving inanimate objects to shield them from attacks, or shrouding them in spectral weightless armor that protects as well as full plate. Especially honorable and righteous mortals might temporarily gain paladin powers to overcome a foe.

Sioraattu

God of ecology, extinction, nature

Alignment: N

Racial Origin: Unknown

Sioraattu represents the active, consuming aspects of nature pressing forward with hunger and many offspring until resources become scarce. Rather than seeking balance, he pushes from one extreme to the other, such as wolves eating rabbits until the rabbits become scarce and most wolves starve to death, allowing the rabbits time to repopulate and continue the cycle. Sometimes these extremes cause extinctions, especially when other factors tip the balance too far. Sioraattu has seen ecosystems collapse dozens of times on many worlds, but so long as some creatures remain, life finds a way to adapt, survive, and reclaim the empty spaces.

His followers study and emulate wild beasts, using this knowledge overwhelm their enemies. For example, a wolf priest might lead a group of bandits, teaching them stealth and teamwork to take down wealthier prey. Some are more relaxed in their attitude and focus instead on breeding hardier livestock to survive winter, famine, or disease.

His temples are either native buildings decorated with a beast theme, or large animal lairs converted for humanoid use, often with dangerous animals as guards or semi-tame pets. Formal clothing is a leather vest and sturdy leather boots or sandals decorated with animal fur. Bones, teeth, and ivory find common use in jewelry and ceremonial items. His holy book is *The Strong Must Eat*, and explains animal husbandry and dangerous predators across different terrains.

Sioraattu shows favor by enhancing others with animal powers, including unnatural strength and agility, defensive abilities like porcupine quills, poisonous frog skin, or a reptile's ability to sense heat. A minor transformation appropriate to the blessing (such as cat eyes, wolf ears, or snake fangs) lasts as long as the effect.

Thraxes The Warlord

God of conquest, invention, nobility, warfare

Alignment: LE

Racial Origin: Onaryx

Warlord Thraxes is an apex predator, using skill, intelligence, physical prowess, magic, and technology to destroy his opponents. Garbed in mithral armor, his hunched, gangly form appears awkward, but can bend like steel and snap back into position faster than a bowstring, striking like a snake and using his momentum to propel him to his next foe. He views chaotic, open warfare as a waste of resources, and believes the easiest way for achieving victory is to kill an enemy's officers to demoralize their troops and leave them without orders.

The Warlord's followers consider themselves superior to common soldiers, gifted with a mix of arrogance, charisma, and ambition which makes them effective military leaders. A few act on their own or in small groups, becoming assassins, saboteurs, and spies, but many have a personal code forbidding them from killing noncombatants or civilians, and they've been known to adopt enemy war orphans to raise as their own within the church.

Temples to Thraxes are built like watchtowers, with one secure entrance at ground level, defensible windows on the upper floors, and onaryx statues adorning the roof and outer walls to confuse enemies as to how many defenders await. Formal clothing is a gray or brown uniform-like garment that buttons on one side, often augmented with small pieces of light-weight armor and a fierce-looking helm. Thraxes's holy book is *War Wings*, which gives advice on large-scale warfare, personal combat, dueling, and negotiating terms.

Thraxes shows his favor to mortals by closing wounds, extending a weapon's reach or range to hit a dangerous foe, improving the morale of common troops, and routing enemy forces even when outnumbered or outskilled.

Wol'Pi'Lo Five Shells

Deity of armor/protection, fear, volcanoes, water

Alignment: CE

Racial Origin: Bil'djooli

Wol'pi'lo is a terrifying creature of tentacles, ornate horns, and protective shells covered in patches of lava hot enough to boil the ocean around it. It rends holes in the sea floor to create geothermal vents to bask in, directs scalding bursts to kill prey, and crushes enemies beneath its great bulk or impales them on its horns like trophies. Wol'pi'lo wants to colonize all worlds capable of supporting aquatic life, sending the bil'djooli to terraform them, while using other planets as sources for raw materials and slaves.

Wol'pi'lo's worshipers bear the colonization doctrine like a flag of war, bringing paralarvae with them to release into new oceans by the thousands. Only some of these spawn survive and adapt to their new environment, with the rest becoming food for those which remain. Bil'djooli faithful inject themselves with fertilized eggs before entering battle, so that even if slain, their young will hatch days later, feasting on their corpses to grow strong.

Temples to Wol'pi'lo are large and spacious, mixing volcanic rock and organic shells which prove useful as simple armor in emergencies. Rather than specialized clothing, bil'djooli priests inject glowing ink into their bodies, allowing them to create lava-like patterns on their skin at will. Priests decorate their armor with images and carvings of lava and thermal vents. Their holy text is *The Seething Tide*, usually memorized in oral form, but sometimes represented in abstract pictographs.

Wol'pi'lo is usually indifferent to worshipers, but rewards those who achieve a notable goal by tearing off one of its regenerative limbs and sending it to a temple so the faithful may consume it, temporarily gaining additional power and increased fertility.

Yajaan the World-Dreamer

Deity of cycles of life, stargates, space travel

Alignment: CN

Racial Origin: Unknown

Yajaan is a mysterious deity who seeds life on worlds, demiplanes, and even abandoned humanoid bases between the stars. It leaves these experiments for decades, centuries, or millennia, only returning to study the resulting lifeforms and environment, collect samples, and then eradicate or abandon them. It marks locations it visits with seven-starred pylons or stone arches resembling Patron gateways, but doesn't explain its motives to other beings or what it does with its collected samples. Yajaan avoids interacting with other divine beings and their agents, preferring to magically shift away rather than debate, parley, or battle.

Yajaan's followers study all kinds of living creatures, often visiting exotic worlds to witness their deity's handiwork, and bringing detailed records back to civilization for discussion. They revere and maintain gateways to other worlds, considering them holy relics of Yajaan's power (even if they were originally operated by the ancient Patrons or Principalities).

Temples to Yajaan are rare, and usually little more than a large chamber or library on a world with multiple interplanetary gates. The entrance is always a rounded doorway decorated with seven stars, and the interior has landscape paintings of many strange worlds. Formal clothing is a many-layered robe in contrasting shades of pale gray and brown. Its holy text is *Catalog of the Third Cycle*, which includes tales of many seeded worlds and alternate dimensions across time and space.

Yajaan rarely intervenes directly in mortal affairs, but when it does it usually takes the form of activating or altering the destination of an interplanetary gate, teleporting a creature out of harm's way, or allowing a person to survive lethal injuries for a limited time.

The Treasure Within

By Chris A. Jackson

They say passing through a gate changes you. Maybe so. Maybe I change every time I pass through one—going from planet to planet. Or maybe that's just superstition. Regardless, I do know one thing: it always gives me a headache.

The universe rushed toward me, billions of pinpricks of light all coming at me at once until I was bathed in luminescence, every part of me throbbing with power, my implants humming as if they wanted to jump out of my skin. The gate puked me out the other end, and the light, the power, and the sensation I was about to fly apart vanished. I staggered, steadied, and braced myself for the headache.

I wasn't disappointed.

While pain blossomed behind my eyes, both the flesh and the clockwork ones, two Nambrin goons stepped up to me for the usual inspection. All the gates in Zel-Argose are controlled by the coteries that run the city. They're nothing but criminals, really, but don't say that to their faces. The Nambrin Coterie is one of the few that owns two gates, which makes them one of the more powerful. The two goons were inspecting me to make sure I wasn't smuggling anything through their gate without giving them first dibs on buying it.

"A successful trip, Anasya?" One of the inspectors jotted my name down on his list, his teeth glinting with pointed silver caps. His name was Tanse, and he knew I salvaged the Shattered Zone. His partner, whom I'd never met, held a wicked two-pronged fork in his hands, the tips humming with energy. He looked like he wanted to use the weapon and I didn't want to give him the opportunity.

"Not very." I handed my pack over. "Some mithralite ore and a few rough diamonds."

"Let's have a look." He waved me over to a stout table and put my pack down.

The gate pulsed behind me and another traveler staggered through, met by another team of inspectors. I kept my attention on Tanse as he searched my bag. He put two of the nicer uncut diamonds aside, and closed the flap.

"Anything else?" He eyed me sidelong.

"Nothing but my gear." I met his eyes without flinching.

"Let's have your duster." He held out one meaty hand and smiled.

I shrugged out of my heavy jacket and handed it over. I have more than a few weapons, tools, and other surprises tucked in the pockets, but he ignored them as he patted it down. He put it on the table and turned back to me.

"Hand over the sword and hold your arms out."

I hated this part, but with fork-boy standing ready to skewer me at the slightest provocation, I didn't dare argue. I unclipped my rapier from my belt and handed the weapon over. The sword, like me, is much more than it looks to be, but Tanse just put it on the table and patted me down professionally, his hands exploring every place likely to hold any contraband. He knew I had as much metal as meat under my clothes, and didn't say a word when his touch found my cold, unyielding implants. Everyone from the Shattered Zone has implants. Living in a world that's been reduced to nothing but a loose nest of asteroids, you either adapt or perish. The clockwork gizmos that keep me alive are as much a part of me as the fleshy bits.

His knuckles rapped the hard stays of my corset, but the garment is too tight to hide anything under it, so he didn't make me take it off. Good thing. I shifted my stance as he felt down my leg to the top of my right boot.

"What's this?" Tance patted the bulge beneath the soft leather on the inside of my calf.

"A new support strut I had installed. I broke my leg last month, and decided to—"

A ring on Tanse's left hand pulsed with a red glow, and he stood up to glare at me. "Don't lie to me, Anasya. Now what's in your boot?"

I cursed under my breath and reached down to loosen the lacings. The slim ingot of lustrous black metal slipped from hiding, and I handed it over with a sheepish grin and a shrug. "Just a little profit margin."

"Adamantine?" Tanse squinted at the ingot, then at me. "I could confiscate this as contraband, you know."

I frowned. "You could, but I'd file a protest with the Auditor."

Tanse snorted in disgust. "Fat lot of good that'd do you." We both knew the Auditor's authority over the coteries was perfunctory at best.

"Maybe, but my complaint would shut your gate down for a few days." I pointed to the bar of dark metal in his hand. "That'll cost Nambrin more than one ingot of adamantine."

"Or Barthy here could stick you with his fork, and we could sell your clockwork implants in the bazaar."

The threat was just a bargaining tactic, but I had to play along or risk an even more thorough search. Thing about inspectors is they generally stop inspecting once they find something. "Five hundred for the ingot and those two stones you picked out." They were worth more, but I had a lot to lose if Tanse took offense and threw me in lockup.

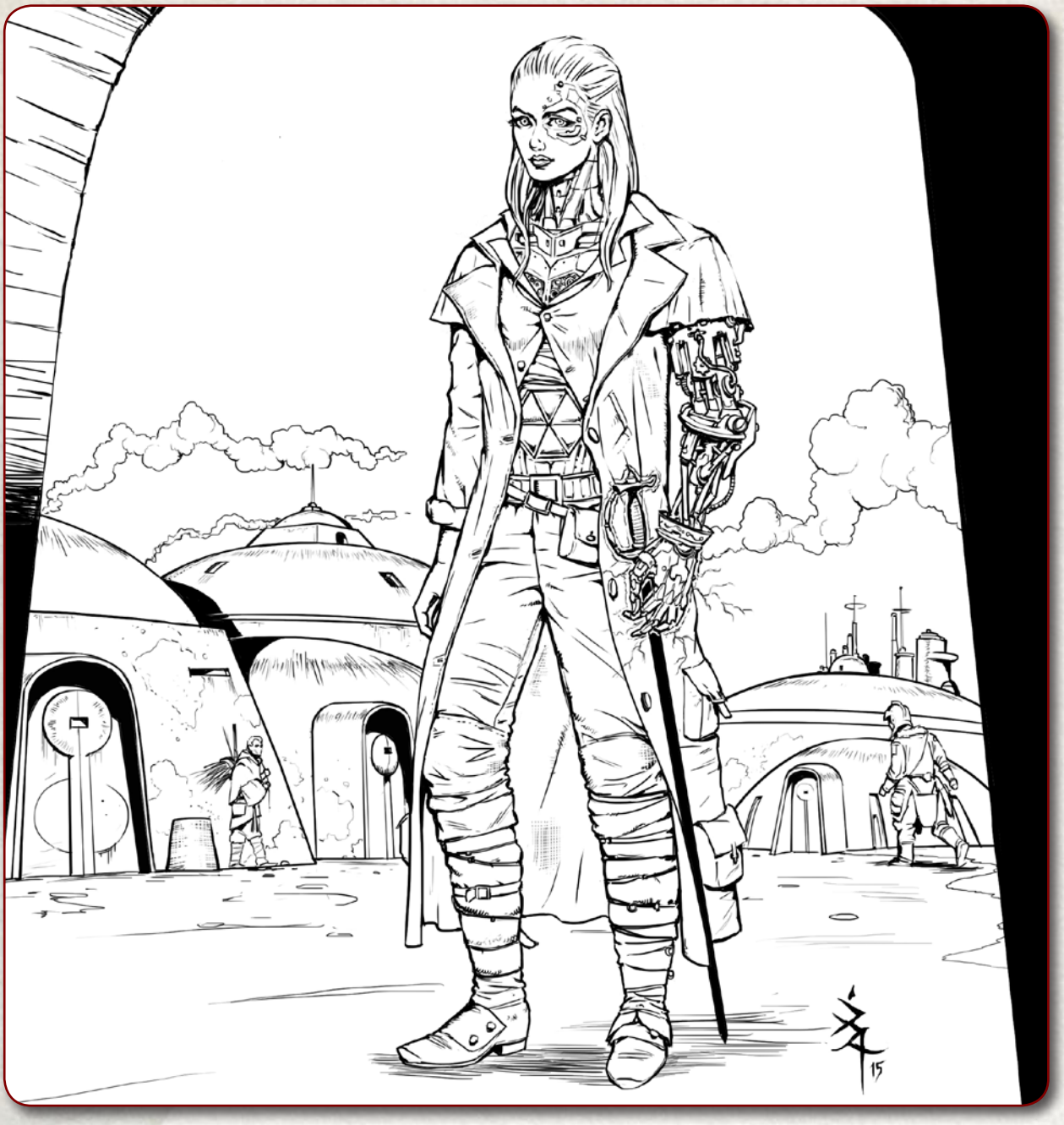
He hefted the bar in his hand with a silvery grin. "Four hundred."

"Four seventy-five."

"Four fifty."

"Done."

Tanse put the ingot on the table, handed me my gear, and smiled again. I think the inspectors work on commission. He counted out the money in shiny platinum coins, minus my tithe for using Nambrin's gate, of course.



"See you next trip, Anasya." He nodded and pointed to the exit. "Be careful out there. Zel-Argose is a dangerous place."

"Right." I walked out into the sweltering, dusty streets of the city with my hand near my blade and a spring in my step—no pun intended. I do have springs. They're just not in my feet.

For the most part, the city's populace is human, or at least humanoid, but as a hub world, with more than a dozen gates to bring in trade, Argosa has more than its share of aliens, even more than usual now with all the refugees from planets annexed by the Hegemony. The first time you get a glimpse under the hood of a burnoose and see six multifaceted eyes staring back at you above a pair of mandibles, your stomach does a little flip. You never get used to the feeling that whatever it is, it might be looking at you as a potential meal instead of a business opportunity…or both.

I lengthened my stride toward the bazaar. I could have gotten a rickshaw or coach to save boot leather, but it felt good to walk under a real sky for a change. One advantage of being a clockwork cyborg is that fatigue only hits when your components wind down. Mine only get low on power if I have to fight a lot, but I don't like to fight if I don't have to. We also don't get hungry, thirsty, or sleepy, which can be a blessing or a curse.

At the bazaar, I sold my salvaged ore and remaining diamonds to a dwarf mineralogist I knew from the many

visits I'd made to Zel-Argose over the years. We had a standard arrangement, so there wasn't much haggling. I pocketed the gold and moved on. I had bigger fish to fry that had nothing to do with the contents of my pack.

Finally, I ducked under a broad, blue-and-white awning and entered the non-descript edifice of Corrmarch's Eclectic Beverage Emporium.

Darkness and cool air enveloped me. The latter was welcome after the sweltering dusty streets, and the former enabled Corrmach's covert security staff to evaluate new arrivals before they could see anything. My clockwork eye whirred and clicked to adjust to the dim lighting faster than any human and most alien eyes could. As usual, the place looked busy. Corrmach makes a lot of money supplying a secure and quiet venue where the various factions of Zel-Argose can conduct business on neutral ground. I discerned more than a dozen different species of humanoid and twice as many alien ones, even a few I didn't recognize. Eyes and other analogous organs inspected me then turned away in disinterest. I was just another scavenger, here to make a deal.

I picked a corner booth and sat with my back to the wall. When one of the servers approached, I ordered a coffee with cocoa and pepper—purely medicinal—and asked him to send some messages for me. He nodded and accepted a silver Argon for the service along with the three sealed notes from the inside pocket of my duster. My business associates knew I was due soon, but not exactly when. They wanted what I had very badly, and would come running at my summons.

The coffee banished my headache, but the dull drone of alien music being played by an arachnoid bard at the other end of the common room threatened to reignite it. It looked and sounded like the thing was squeezing a hornet's nest under its arms to me, but I've literally got a tin ear, and have little appreciation for music.

I waited.

Three coffees later, right on time, my business associates began to arrive. Pan-Jhee came in first, dressed in his usual maroon robes and headscarf tied with gold cord. Removing his tinted goggles, he swept the room with his gaze, smiling when he spotted me and starting over. We'd known each other for years, and he always gave me good prices. Tarenia Yolt ambled through the door before Pan-Jhee even reached my table. She saw me instantly and waddled across the floor, her powder blue kaftan billowing like a pastel circus tent as she nudged a few chairs and tables out of her way with her bulk. Tarenia is a large woman. I don't know how she moves so lightly on her feet, but I'd be willing to bet there's magic involved.

I rose and grasped Pan-Jhee's hands. "Good to see you, old friend."

"Likewise." He glanced over his shoulder and stepped aside as Tarenia approached. "Tarenia, you're looking prosperous today."

"I *am* prosperous." She flashed pearly rounded teeth and nodded respectfully. "You look well, Anasya."

"I'm well enough, thank you." I knew Tarenia less-well than Pan-Jhee, but she had a spotless reputation, and more money than some planets I've visited. "As soon as Kweesh arrives, we'll get down to business. Can I buy you a cup?"

Pan-Jhee and Tarenia exchanged a glance that said they knew something I didn't.

"What?"

"Master Kweesh won't be arriving, I'm afraid." Tarenia stroked her jowls with fingers like sausages, a gesture that I knew signified unease. "He…met with an untimely end three days ago."

"What?" I'd known Kweesh a long time, and though he occasionally dipped into some shady dealings, he wasn't involved in anything violent that I knew of. "What happened?"

"It looked like an accident." Pan-Jhee shrugged. "He stepped out of Toipa's Tattoo Parlor onto the street and a rinoch-drawn coach ran him down. There wasn't much left. If it *wasn't* an accident, it was masterfully done."

"I can't prove it, but I think it was intentional." Tarenia frowned and shook her head, her jowls jiggling like fleshy pudding. "He made some enemies recently. *Powerful* ones."

"Damn."

Zel-Argose had always been dangerous, but things like this had become more frequent lately. Some thought the Ultari Hegemony was taking out people who worked with the Bellianic Accord. I knew Tarenia did, though she had no clue I'd discerned her loyalties. I don't have any myself, but I'd sell all my clockwork parts for scrap before I'd work for the Ultari.

"Shall we conduct our business, then?" Pan-Jhee summoned a servant, ignoring Tarenia's flash of ire at his insensitivity. I shrugged it off. Pan-Jhee was a businessman and had little time for sentiment. "A private room."

"This way, if you please." The servant led us to a small room that sported little more than a table, chairs, and a credenza. We entered and took seats. "Libation?"

"Privacy." Pan-Jhee's curt tone surprised me. He was rarely rude, even to servants.

"Very well." The servant bowed and left.

"So, was your foray to your home world successful?" Tarenia shifted in her chair, trying to get comfortable on a piece of furniture half the size necessary to accommodate her.

"I found what I was looking for and brought it in with no one knowing, so let's start the bidding at five thousand gold Argons."

"I'll pay five thousand," Tarenia said.

"Six," Pan-Jhee countered, staring at the corpulent woman in open disdain.

Again, his manner surprised me. I'd been involved in

bidding contests with Pan-Jhee many times, and he was never so rude. I wondered if some new animosity had blossomed between my associates in my absence.

"Six thousand five hundred."

"Sixty-eight hundred."

The bidding continued, the increments growing smaller as the sum grew. When Tarenia bid ninety-five hundred, Pan-Jhee frowned, shook his head, and walked out without a word.

"Well!" Tarenia's eyes widened at his sudden departure then turned to me. "Do we have a deal?"

"As soon as you show me the money." I was still bothered by Pan-Jhee's unusual demeanor, but business was business.

"Of course, but I must ensure our anonymity first." Tarenia wove her pudgy fingers in an intricate pattern, her fingernails glowing briefly with magic. Seemingly satisfied, she reached into the voluminous folds of her kaftan and withdrew a large blue satin pouch. The contents clanked as she dropped it on the table. "There's ten thousand in minted platinum ingots. Feel free to inspect them."

I did, and she wasn't lying. I placed five hundred gold Argons in platinum coins on the table as her change and stood. Taking off my jacket, I tucked the heavy pouch in a pocket and lay it aside. Tarenia didn't reach for the coins, but watched me like a hungry owl eyeing a mouse.

The bronze latches securing my corset clicked open at my touch. Vanity aside, the garment doesn't just enhance my figure. The stays are steel, and there's a weave of fine mail under the material. Next, I unbuttoned my shirt from the bottom up, leaving the top three fastened for modesty. A dark blue serpent tattoo shone on the pale skin of my stomach. It looked mundane, but when I touched its eyes then the tip of its tail, the serpent writhed briefly and split down the middle.

"Doesn't that *hurt*?" Tarenia fingered her jowls again, apparently uneasy with my incongruous anatomy.

"Only the first time."

I peeled my flesh back to reveal the whirring gears and springs of my hidden cache, a small hexagonal frame surrounded by clockwork machinery. I turned away to touch the corners of the frame in the correct combination, then turned back. Gears whirred, and six triangular panels opened like the petals of a metal flower. Delving the extradimensional space within, I retrieved my smuggled treasure, a multifaceted crystal as long as my hand. Placing it on the table, I closed up my safe, my skin, my shirt, and reached for my corset.

Tarenia ignored me, all of her attention focused on the crystal. She muttered a few arcane words and ran a finger down one gleaming facet. "Beautiful."

"Satisfied?" I fastened my corset and reached for my duster.

"Quite." Tarenia scooped the platinum coins into a fold of her kaftan, but left the crystal lying there. "You know whom I represent, don't you?"

"I…" I shrugged into my coat, even heavier now with the weight of treasure. "Not for sure."

"The Bellianic Accord."

"I thought so."

"Kweesh was murdered by an Ultari agent, but I don't know who, or why."

"Oh?" I didn't know what this had to do with me, or why she was telling me.

She pointed to the crystal. "You'll have learned what that does during its acquisition."

"Something to do with making a gate work." Gates are all different, but some use similar components. I'd gotten the crystal from a broken gate in the Zone.

"Yes, and there's a gate here in Zel-Argose which the Accord wishes to reactivate."

That got my attention. "Why tell me?"

"Because our agents are known to our enemies. Yet, you're nothing but a smuggler, and run less of a risk of meeting the same end as Kweesh." She pointed to the crystal with one sausage finger. "If you agree to help us install that in the dysfunctional gate owned by the Thanex Coterie, I'll pay you exactly double what I have today."

My mouth opened to tell her she was crazy, but then closed. I swallowed hard, and thought about that much money. *Damn*! Almost twenty thousand Argons would buy a villa with servants back home, but Thanex was one of the most powerful and ruthless coteries in the city. If caught, I wouldn't live long enough to collect.

"How would I get in?"

"With intelligence we'll supply. The gate won't activate without a key, which we will apply at a later time when we wish to open it." She made it sound simple.

"All right." I couldn't believe I was agreeing to this. I started unclipping my corset to put the crystal back in hiding. "When?"

"In ten days."

"That's not much time."

"No, it isn't." Tarenia rose and turned toward the door. "Come to my villa this evening, and don't be seen."

"Okay." I slipped the crystal back in my safe and closed up. "I'll be there."

"Good." She placed one hand on the door latch and turned to face me. "And be careful. There's no way to know if the Hegemony might have pierced my wards to eavesdrop on this conversation. If they have, they'll stop at nothing to thwart our plans."

"Right." I closed my corset and adjusted my duster. "I've been told Zel-Argose is a dangerous place."

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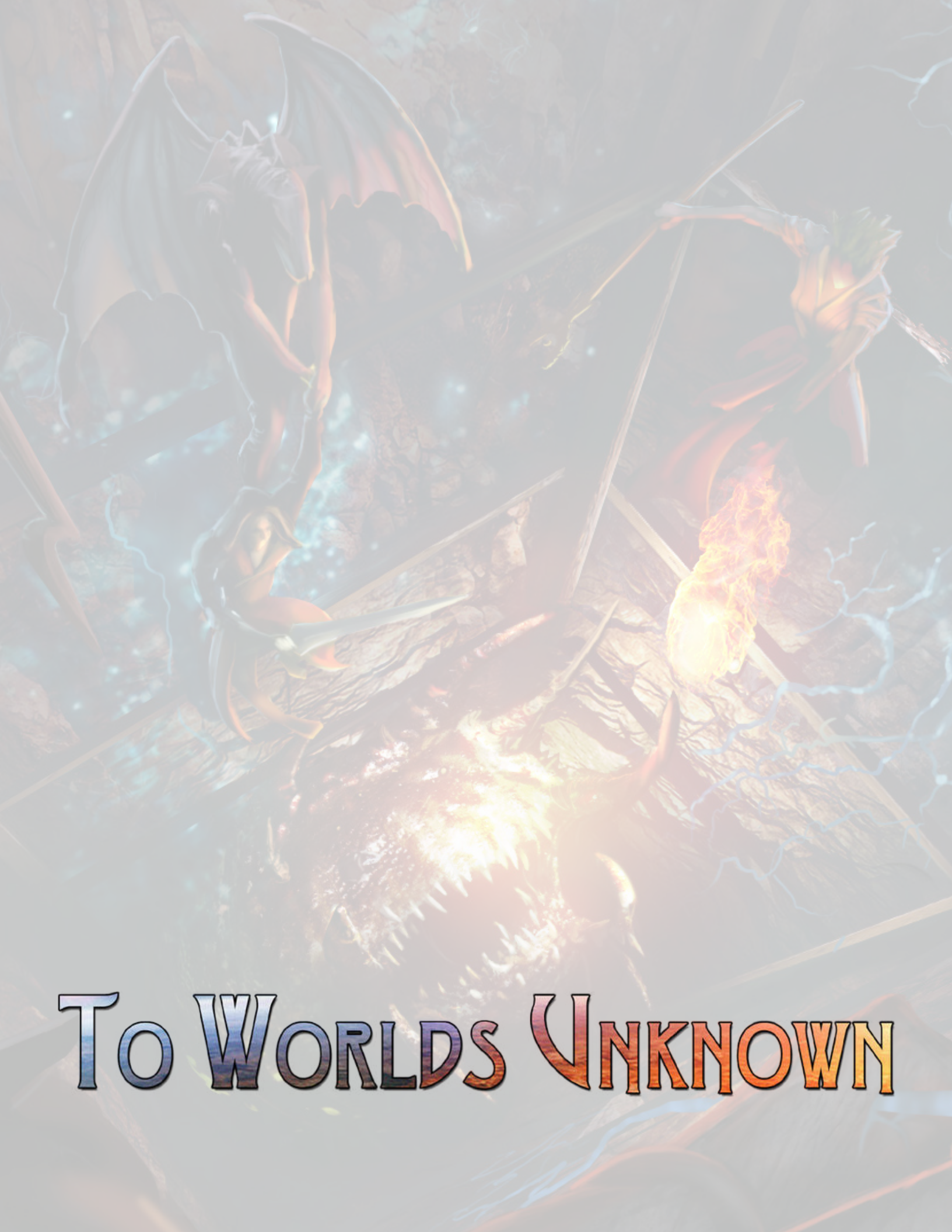

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